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ANNIE JENNINGS.

A Novel.

BY

LESLIE GORE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



LONDON:

RICHARD BENTLEY, NEW BURLINGTON STREET.

1870.

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THE FIRST VOLUME.

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McCaughrin 1882.53
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ANNIE JENNINGS.

CHAPTER I.

“ Ere he parted he would say,
Farewell to lovely Loch Achray,
Where shall he find in foreign land
So lone a lake, so sweet a strand ?”

“ *Lady of the Lake.*”—SCOTT.

ON the eastern shore of Loch Achray, in Perthshire, and sheltered in greater part by richly-wooded hills, stands a farmhouse of a grotesque form, yet neither unpicturesque nor ill-fitted to the surrounding scenery, beautiful as it is.

A great gable end was stuck on to one place, a turret to another, an oriel window was thrown out here, a massive portico built there. These additions appeared to have been given directly as the need for them was felt by the owner, and the visible comfort they afforded, with their own irregularities, gave them a certain kind of beauty.

That portico, how useful in keeping off the biting bitter blast of the north wind, the only quarter left exposed—that pitiless north, which when it has full sway spares neither flower, nor shrub, nor tree, cutting them and withering them with relentless force. That turret chamber, how delicious a spot in which to read and write and

look out through narrow casements and get kaleidoscopic views, dyed with the rays of the setting sun, of the matchless scenery from the west.

Then again, that large oriel window facing south, covered over with trailing japonica and passion flower and jasmine, all fostered, caressed, and kissed by the sweet south wind. How pleasant a room in which to sit; if a woman, with your needle just pricking the cambric, while the eyes wander over the landscape, and every sense is employed taking in eager draughts of all that wondrous beauty, which becomes more than an enjoyment, something higher once we find the clue to it. And that long gable end, with its two lines of dead wall, whose

palpable use is to contain endless volumes, records of lives of great men, of good men, of happy and unhappy men—more, alas! of these latter, but all telling us eagerly of life, teaching lessons to the living by which they may profit if they will. Telling of carelessness and of joys, of fears and of sorrows, of hopes cherished and green, of hopes blasted and withered: the time-old lesson, as taught by the preacher, “Vanity of vanities, all is vanity;” and of His teaching, too, whose lips were touched by fire, who said, “The grass withereth, the flower thereof fadeth, but the Word of God endureth for ever.”

At the time our tale commences this whilom farmhouse was inhabited

by a widow lady and her step-daughter.

Mrs. Jennings had been Miss Jennings, cousin to her husband, but the closeness of the relationship certainly needed no dispensation to enable them to marry; beloved by him from very early years, brought up in the one village, led by tender fostering hands to worship in the one kirk, they two had sung out of the one hymn-book—the little girl making a pretence of reading while the big boy, Andrew, pointing to each word and repeating them very clearly, aided and abetted little Annie in her deception.

What happy days were those for Annie, when school-hours past, Andrew would take her with him to seek

for bramble-berries, and she would return home with her soft red lips dyed black as ink, and with her pinafore a sad spectacle of stains, not so easily effaced as those on the ripe lips.

But all things change, even bramble-berries are not always in season, neither do little boys remain little boys, and Andrew must give over childhood's sports and leave his native village. To Edinburgh he went to learn medicine, with Annie's and his mutual understanding that so soon as he became rich he was to return and marry her. But time works changes, as we have already truismatically observed, and Annie leaves behind her years of happy childhood, and

reaches that sweetest age of lovely maidenhood, seventeen years.

Slim, soft-eyed, dark-haired Annie, with her faultless profile, and her light, active tread, had now many admirers. With inherent coquetry she made all of them welcome up to a certain point, but beyond that boundary none dared to pass. Annie was fully conscious of her charms, and had not yet learned to sympathize with broken hearts from personal experience.

But affliction now came on her young girlhood, not what causes that which is commonly meant by a broken heart, yet sorrow such as wrings our very heart-strings, in a loss never to be replaced—the loss of a parent. Rachel's cry for her children, “when she refused

to be comforted," was an evidence of agony, yet her loss—what was it to the loss of a mother? And such a loss was Annie called upon to suffer. Her mother was taken, and she was left an orphan.

Her father was but a memory to her, for years he had been dead. A lieutenant in an infantry regiment, he had risen from the ranks. His father, a clerk in a commercial house, had intended his son to pursue the same calling, but young Jennings had a fancy and a will of his own; he ran away and enlisted, and gained the good opinion of his colonel by his conduct, who, in consideration of it and of his respectable connections, procured him a commission. In course of time he

married Miss Gray, whose sole fortune was one thousand pounds, and retired from the army in broken health, and shortly after died. His widow received a small pension, and on it and the interest of her one thousand pounds she contrived to live, and to bring up her fair little daughter, giving her a moderate education, from which Annie might have reaped better fruit had the soil been richer.

But Annie did not know a want; she was happy in that she was content, and had never experienced a grief till now. Andrew's departure was not felt by her as such; would he not return some day, and, if rich, she would marry him.

In the meantime she had plenty

of admirers, and she did not desire to marry. Her village life, with its daily routine, was enjoyment, and her mother was her occupation; for she had been an invalid, and now, alas! that she was gone, Annie's occupation was gone likewise.

With her first grief lying heavy on her heart, she was taken to live in Edinburgh with a maiden aunt, her mother's sister, Miss Gray. And to leave her sweet village home, with perfumed heather and mountain air, blue lochs, and deep rushing rivers. To leave red and gold, and green, and blue, and gray, skies, braes, wells, and cascades; and above all, to leave the grand old restful moun-

tains, in exchange for a dingy corner house in Broughton Place, Flat No. 3, with its one view,—the architectural deformity of a Free Kirk Meeting House. Alas! what a change; and Annie Jennings, albeit of an uncommonly well-balanced mind, was in deep dejection. Her aunt, a kindly-natured woman, tried to cheer her.

“Cheer up, pretty one, you shall never know want while I live, and if you act like a sensible good child, all I have shall be yours at my death, and that is not so little after all these things are sold.” (She glanced complacently round at very solid-looking mahogany furniture.) “And I have got eight hundred odd in railway shares and steam

companies ; this with your own money, my dear, will make you more than comfortable. Why, my child, you will be a match some day—umph, umph ! I only regret that I sunk any money in an annuity, although it does enable me to live as comfortably as any duchess in the land. Umph, umph !”

“ Dear Aunt Jane, you are very good.”

“ Good, child ? Ah, no. Are not you my poor dear sister’s only bairn, and now left to me—to me, the childless woman by Providence—for a comfort and a blessing, I trust ? Come now, Annie—smile, child ; don’t I tell you that you’ll be *a match* some of these days ? Umph, umph.”

Miss Gray uttered this very empha-

tically, examining, at the same time, Annie's face and figure with critical eyes, nodding her approval, and umph, umphing through her nose. She stroked Annie's soft brown hair and patted her slight shoulders, then clapping her back to the wall she marked off her height.

"Five feet four inches, a very nice height, my dear, leaving you great choice. You are not too tall for tall men, nor too small for little men. Let me now see whom I shall ask to tea."

"Oh, dear, dear Aunt Jane," sobbed Annie, "remember mother has not gone from me a month yet; surely you will not ask me to see strangers?"

"Umph, umph, child," replied Aunt

Jane, scratching her nose in some confusion, "I believe I forgot. Well, well, you must come to church, at all events, and I will call the attention of the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton to you—times of grief are just the seasons for the visits of the clergy—the heart is soft, and susceptible of understanding the doctrines of our faith. Yes, child, you shall come to the English church." And Miss Gray, as customary, threw her left thumb over her shoulder in its direction—her right thumb was seldom called into operation, and only on occasions of great excitement.

Miss Gray had been brought up in Gospel freedom, but within a year or so she had got trammelled by means of nets set for the unwary by the Honour-

able and Reverend Daniel Merton. The Honourable Mr. Merton had found his birth of great use in the ministry, and, to the wrath of the Reverend John Bogle, he had drawn away many precious souls from his fold.

In vain he denounced him; the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton walked all the more majestically through the streets of Edinburgh, throwing back in utter disdain his small aristocratic head, which was so well set on his firm shoulders. Mentally he shook off the dust from his feet, if that process can be so accomplished, looking very gentleman-like indeed, and as if he drank nothing less good than the very best claret. We do not know how it was, but the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton

conveyed the idea to all who approached him that he was both a judge of claret and drank of the very best. This could not be owing entirely to his aristocracy, for there are other wines quite as worthy of being patronized by the upper crust of society as claret; but claret somehow seemed to be his portion in the land of the living, and we will venture to assert that, no matter at what dinner table the Honourable Mr. Merton was entertained, the master of the feast would desire his servants *to take that old claret to Mr. Merton*. While, on the other hand—but this was natural—the Reverend Mr. Bogle looked the recipient of what the Scotch name *tuddy*. This is a long digression to have made, considering that poor Miss Jennings stands looking

very scared at the plans for immediate action proposed by her energetic aunt. At last she articulates :

“Dear Aunt Jane, you forget that I am a member of the Free Kirk.”

“Not a bit, my dear. Umph, umph. I remember all about it, and so *was* I; but the best society here are Episcopals, and Mr. Merton is a delightful young man—not the least extreme in views. No, my dear, I could not go in for *that*. He says nothing against the Established Church, the U.P., or the Free Kirk. He is far too gentlemanlike for vituperation. All he said to me one day when paying me a visit, was, ‘Miss Gray, come to my church and I will show you a more excellent way.’ That was all. I went there ever

since, and so shall you, please God.”

Annie Jennings was quite unopinionated and of a yielding disposition in so far that she had no strong passions; and her impulsive, self-willed aunt led her in this as in many other ways hither and thither where she listed. To the English church she went, and directly fell under the observation of Aunt Jane's pastor.

The Honourable Daniel, the youthful prophet, perceived, with the quick observation remarkable in physicians of souls as of bodies, the new worshipper, and saw at a glance—for which he should not be blamed, O reader—that she was fair to look on and very interesting—so interesting, in fact, that the well-written and pro-

found discourse on ‘Time, times, and the dividing of time,’ was delivered with unwonted hesitation, and caused many a tremor in the bosoms of the feminine part of his congregation. Miss Gray’s fears were raised to such a pitch that she hardly refrained from sending up the prophet her handsome bottle of strong smelling salts.

“My love,” she said to Annie, returning home that day, “I never heard poor Mr. Merton deliver so weakly. He is not well—surely he is not well. Umph, umph.”

Her fears on this head were dispersed next day, however, by the appearance in her own drawing-room, flat No. 3, Broughton Place, of the Honourable and Reverend Daniel himself, with slender

umbrella and well-brushed hat, who assured her that he was in his normal state of health.

“ Apart,” he said now—“ apart from the pleasure of seeing you, Miss Gray, I come to inquire about the interesting young person I observed in your pew yesterday.”

Young person was a term employed by the Honourable Mr. Merton quite unintentionally offensive—he had imbibed the use of it with his mother’s milk as descriptive of a race of doubtful ancestry. This pretty young lady in her mournful dress might have or have had a grandfather ; but Mr. Merton did not know, and Miss Gray’s companionship was no guarantee to the fact. And although it was possible that she might

be a countess in her own right, she was more likely to be Mrs. Watson (the milliner's) fore-woman. It was safe to inquire for this *interesting young person*, and the nomenclature struck all harmless on Miss Gray's ears. She now informed him that she was her niece, and under her care, placed in a manner (as she explained) by Providence, and so she had taken her to his church, although she had been brought up in the membership of the Free Kirk.

“Does this meet with your approval, sir?” she inquires.

“Perfectly, Miss Gray; she is too young I should say to be fairly launched in the errors of schism, let her first hear the more excellent way and then judge for herself.”

Miss Gray was greatly pleased to be so commended, and while her pastor sat in silent repose holding on his knee his well-brushed hat, she held forth on her niece's history, making it as winding if not so beautiful as the Frith of Forth. Mr. Merton's patience was at last exhausted when it seemed it would not be rewarded by the sight of the young person herself; and he now very decidedly interrupted Miss Gray's flow of talk by inquiring might he not be favoured by an introduction to "the—the—young lady." And Miss Gray, reproaching herself vehemently for not having thought of doing so, hurried out of the room to look for Annie, but without success; for soon as Mr. Merton called she had escaped out of doors,

out of her dingy bed-room with its wretched one view, out and away from that corner where cats delight to hold their meetings, screaming as cats alone can do ; but they, even they had forsaken the gray dusty pavements, and held their concerts on the roofs of the houses from whence can be obtained a glorious view of Edinburgh's pride, the Calton Hill. It was to this spot that Annie, all impatient for fresh air, hurried as fast as active limbs could carry her.

CHAPTER II.

ANNIE MEETS WITH AN ACQUAINTANCE ON CALTON HILL.

AWAY, away from stifling flats and hot pavements, from noisy streets, from vendors' cries and knife-grinders' clarionets, hastened Annie, the mountain-bred girl, to seek for freshness and repose on the Calton Hill. There, seated on its brow, she tore off her bonnet and drew in, with pleasure, draughts of fresh breezes sent up by admiring Frith of Forth as its tribute of incense to the Scotch Idol.

What a view lay spread before her ! truly with even one grain of poetic fancy she would have revelled in it. Close to hand stand Arthur's Seat and Salisbury Crags, then sharply, clearly defined in the light of an October sun descending to its rest ; with loving lingering fingers, it was leaving glowing marks of its skill on surrounding nature ; some more, some less received dabs from that wondrous painter ; all, save one dark pile, that stretched below, couched in heavy shadow, seemed itself to shrink from light like a sentient being conscious of its bosom's deadly secrets.

Poor Queen Mary ! Holyrood is still thine own, in death as in life, thou art its interest ; for among all who lived and loved, who suffered and who died,

the brightest and the gayest, the darkest and the saddest, all pale before the centre-piece, the flag-staff for which so many battles raged, and still rage; while neither side allows itself to be the vanquished. In the words of the old ballad it may be said of Mary's friends and foes—

“Some say that we wan,
And some say that they wan.”

And both parties are ready *to bobbit again*. And not until that day when the secrets of all men shall be made manifest will that erring gifted creature receive a true judgment.

Annie's mind was naturally more occupied with her own changed circumstances than with Queen Mary's fate;

and although her eye glanced with some degree of pleasure over the prospect before her, and she felt thankful to breathe again fresh air, yet her thoughts reverted to her early days, those pleasant days so sadly brought to a close of her western home, and she remembered now for the first time that Andrew Jennings, her bold lover, her gentle companion, inhabited with her the same city: and as saddest feelings often border on the ludicrous, she even laughed aloud, remembering the parting between them, and recalling the solemn plighted troth of boy and little girl.

“Poor dear Andrew!” she exclaimed, looking up as a shadow fell before her and met the keen searching gaze of

a thick set young man. Annie blushed faintly, (she never performed any mental act with vigour,) and hurriedly putting on her bonnet, which she had thrown carelessly on the grass, she drew down her veil. The young man smiled—and his was a pleasant smile—then quietly placing himself beside her, he asked,

“Has this been a good year for bramble-berries, Annie?”

Annie started, but instantly exclaimed,

“O, Andrew, can this be you?”

“It can indeed. And can this ‘be you?’” he inquired, mimicking her sentence, then raising her veil he gazed earnestly into her face, colouring with admiration and pleasure.

Annie laughed, perceiving the favourable impression she had made; then remembering her so late, great sorrow she began to weep. Andrew patted her hand with his soft white hands, and with medical instinct he sought her wrist; her pulses beat with all due soberness, so with a gentle smile he said—

“Don’t weep, pretty one, we must each pay our debts, and of all creditors, death is the most exacting.”

Andrew Jennings was a remarkable young man, and this his very appearance indicated. His splendid head, with thick clustering curls and finely developed forehead, united to a powerful square jaw, clear blue eyes, and handsome mouth completed a face that could

not fail to please; but alas! the figure marred the head-piece, broad shoulders, a stature of five feet three, and legs like an otter. Annie, who had been diligently examining him, broke into a merry peal of laughter, exclaiming,

“O, Andrew! how very funny looking you are.”

Had the cannon on the Castle Hill, announcing to the inhabitants of Edinburgh the hour of one, sounded in his very ear, the effect could not have been greater than that produced by Annie's heedless speech.

Poor Andrew! so keenly susceptible to ridicule, quick in perception, vain, and vain with that uneasy vanity produced by consciousness of powers not

yet acknowledged by the world, to receive so great a shock.

Andrew was a lover of beauty, of symmetry, truly alive to the want of it in his own form, and placing an undue value on it from that very deficiency; to his great intellect were united strong passions, and gazing into that beautiful Madonna face, he felt the boy's latent love for her burst forth, and in a moment blaze with all a man's fierce passion. Then on that passion fell the cruel mocking words,

“O, Andrew ! how very funny looking you are.”

And this from his little play-fellow, whom he had carried unweariedly in his arms for hours, and for whom he had torn his white hands in

reaching to almost unapproachable branches of the holly with its brilliant berries, before whom he had bent his knee in boyish yet most loyal fashion, pledging to her eternal vows; and yet it must be confessed whom he had almost forgotten in the midst of his all-absorbing studies until her magic presence called forth the love not always remembered, yet so surely stored.

A bitter pill, Miss Jennings, you made him swallow that day, the taste of it remained for many a year.

Annie was electrified at the effect she had so giddily produced, for, although as yet he had not uttered a word, she saw his passion boiling

over; his face turned white, great beads rose on his forehead, his chest heaved; he tried to articulate, but for a few moments all in vain; then, with a violent effort, he spoke in a low deep voice, slowly at first, but with gradually increasing vehemence.

“I regret, Miss Jennings, that you have found your old acquaintance so ridiculous an object, and never shall I intrude my odious form on your sight; but, hear of me you shall—hear of me as courted by the young and lovely, hear of my doors being besieged by the noblest and proudest in the land, all waiting on the leisure of this absurd Andrew Jennings, and to whom, for the sake of five minutes of his company, gold shall flow in

like rushing rivers. Hear this you shall, Miss Jennings; and when that day comes, remember this." Then, raising his hat, he rushed wildly down the hill, and was out of her sight in an instant.

Annie was breathless, or she would have cried, "Andrew, come back!" but, before she had found a voice, poor Andrew was gone. Musingly she sat on and wondered, was he crazy? she could not comprehend his nature, it was far above hers; then she thought, will he do himself any harm? should she give notice to the police? he would be so easily described; and, at this last idea, her fancy was so amused that she laughed under breath for many minutes before she

could compose herself sufficiently to face the street passers to return home.

But the day was not very far distant when Andrew Jennings' prophecy came true, and Annie listened with amazement to daily fresh accounts of his eminence as a physician, of his skill as a surgeon. The people of Edinburgh extolled him, the Scotch from all parts of the country came flocking to him, for be it in their praise said, that with them a "prophet is *not* without honour."

Then, as years rolled on his fame spread, and great London doctors bowed before him, foreign doctors flocked to sit at the feet of the great

physician. From distant lands came the sick, the dying, to lay their cases before Doctor Jennings, as the last appeal. And Annie and he never once met : with wonder, and with something of awe, she heard of him, but, to their knowledge, one never saw the other.

Ten years passed away ; Annie, lovely and admired, was still Annie Jennings, notwithstanding Miss Gray's exertions, her endless teas, and the pastoral attentions of the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton. Miss Gray not only spent a fortune in teas, but she accepted teas ; she brought Annie to dances, after having received a hesitating permission from the Honourable Mr. Merton, for to

him Miss Gray first applied before doing so, having been too lately taught the "more excellent way," to shake off the tenets of her days of Gospel teaching.

Annie enjoyed her balls; of all things she delighted in dancing, and was an adept in the art; her slight spare figure, and large boned ancles, carrying little weight, made her an unwearied partner; and this, with her sweet Madonna face, caused her to be much sought after; no matter how the number of the fair sex predominated, Annie Jennings never wanted a partner.

But a hand for a dance, and a hand for life are different things; and as five years passed by, and Annie

was seen at least three evenings in the week, yet had not met with a suitable offer; can we wonder that Miss Gray began to rub her nose vehemently, and to *umph-umph* more than ordinary?

Teas at home, teas abroad, and the results almost nil, surely the prospect was blue. *Almost* nil, for she had had two offers of marriage, one from (oh, whisper) the Reverend Mr. Bogle, who, with frantic passion, had offered to abjure even the cherished doctrine of damnation to all but his elect, for her sweet sake. He met with his deserts, poor man, as few of us do; he was refused and scorned—refused by Annie, and scorned by Miss Gray,

backed up to it by the Honourable Mr. Merton.

The other offer was from a respectable elderly party, who had a splendid villa, with a long line of conservatories at Granton; bought (here was the hitch), with money made from wares sold in the High Street, and there still could be seen the name, although the shop no longer belonged to the party with the villa at Granton; but this was a deceit allowed for in the purchase-money, until the new comer had gained the confidence of the public, and could not be done away with, even though the respectable party at Granton desired to marry the young lady *with the Madonna face*. Miss Gray's heart yearned

after the lovely conservatories, and she remembered Annie's increasing years, which as yet certainly had not diminished her charms, but very soon must.

"Annie," she said to her niece, who could not endure the idea of marrying the gentleman; "Annie, women unfortunately have not the privilege of asking men to marry them, among the indulgences shown to our sex in these days, we have not arrived as yet at that; so, my dear, we must e'en choose the best of those who ask us."

"But, dear Aunt Jane, we have a privilege—that of saying *no*."

"Yes, umph, umph, and being left in the lurch, with too free an exer-

cise of your privilege; but don't cry, child," as Annie's limpid tears fell trickling down her soft cheeks; "don't, I cannot bear to witness your distress, silly though I think it. I won't press it further without the sanction of Mr. Merton, he is so good as to take a warm interest in your welfare, child, and I can depend on his judgment."

Annie looked up quickly with a half smile and blush, but seeing that Miss Gray was looking quite serious and contemplative, she contented herself with replying gently—

"Very well, Aunt; I will also abide by his opinion."

Annie shrewdly guessed the result of this step, quite obtuse as was poor Miss

Gray as so what was so evident to the younger lady.

And she was correct in believing that the Honourable and Reverend Mr. Merton would not be easily satisfied with the choice of a husband for her. When Miss Gray mentioned the subject to him, first dilating on the Granton Villa, and unwillingly winding up with the gentleman's antecedents, Mr. Merton threw back his head farther than was his wont, saying scornfully—

“Marry Miss Jennings to a shopkeeper, my dear Miss Gray!”

“A *retired* shopkeeper,” urged Miss Gray.

“The name still in the business; to be seen any day passing through High Street, Miss Gray!”

“But think of the villa, sir, and the lovely conservatories,” returned Miss Gray, jerking her thumb east — her *right* thumb, mark you — used only on occasions of great excitement.

“Even so, Miss Gray, my humble judgment remains the same.”

“Annie is not as young as she was,” remarked Miss Gray, mournfully.

“None of us are, dear Miss Gray,” he said with a bland smile; “would the prospect be so pitiable even were your niece to remain like her aunt in honoured maidenhood?”

Miss Gray quite coloured at the implied compliment, and Mr. Merton seeing the effect he had produced,

rose, before she could recover presence of mind, and with well-brushed hat and slender umbrella, he bowed himself out of Broughton Place, flat No. 3.

“Well, aunt,” flew in Annie, now inquiring. “Auntie, dear, what news—what did Mr. Merton say?”

“He said he should like you to become like me, umph, umph! What do you think of that, child?” answered Miss Gray, with a mixture of humour and *humeur*. Annie heard and laughed, for she guessed the verdict that was given, in whose favour, so she whistled a favourite valse, and danced round and round the room with infinite glee. Miss Gray sat watching her for a while, and then said—

“I have now done with you, child, so far as matrimony is concerned, even should the man come down the chimney to marry you I will call in the housemaid with her dust-pan, and get her to sweep him out. Umph! umph!”

At this declaration Annie laughed till she cried, and Miss Gray was so pleased with the effect her wit had produced, that she took to hugging her, and aunt and niece had great kissing and making up on the spot; and finally Miss Gray, who had been in early days a great dancer, *took* to the floor, and danced a highland fling to Annie's playing, but springing at one time rather too high for her handsome gasalier, she struck it with

her head, and throwing down one of the glass pendants, broke it into shivers. Luckily her head escaped damage, owing to a good wig and cap.

This accident had the effect of sobering both ladies. Annie rushed to the assistance of her aunt, who lay as if dead on the carpet, until roused to exertion by the entreaties of Annie to try if any limb was broken.

“Lean on me, dearest aunt, and stretch out that leg.”

“I am killed, child, and deservedly,” said Miss Gray, without making a motion to rise.

“O! dear Aunt Jane, just try to get up, or let me examine your head;

it was your head, not your legs or arms that got knocked."

"I believe so, child," with a groan, she answered, "but the shock has paralysed me."

"I will run and fetch some wine, aunt, but first let me ring for Janet."

"No, no, child, wait a bit;" and moaning loudly, Miss Gray stretched out first one limb, then the other; and, with Annie's assistance, she stood up whole and uninjured on her own carpet.

"I am so relieved, dear Aunt Jane, to see you are not hurt."

Miss Gray made no reply, but seating herself on the sofa commenced rubbing down her legs and arms, feel-

ing the joints carefully ; then, taking off wig and cap, she felt her head all over. Having satisfied herself that all was uninjured, she breathed a sigh of relief ; and looking down at Annie, who was on her knees busily picking up the fragments of the broken glass she said—

“Thank God, child, I am sound as a bell, and safe as if in St. Paul’s keeping.”

Annie looked up, and smilingly looked down again, for she remembered then Mr. Merton’s expressed wish, “that she might become one even such as her aunt was,” and certainly she did look a very funny figure, with her smooth shaven crown denuded now of its habitual covering.

“Smile away, child,” cried the quick-witted aunt; “I daresay I am a curious sight,” and going to the mirror she adjusted wig and cap, then turned round, looking a very respectable woman.

“Don’t worry about the glass, Annie; I have got off lightly enough, Heaven knows, after playing the old fool as I have done. We must not fret about the glass, dear. What says the rhyme—

“‘When the milk is spilt, then call the cat,
If a bone be broken, get Doctor Spratt,
But a wounded heart requires the priest,
The lover, the ring, and the marriage feast.’”

But a different course was now given to their current of thought, for

Janet entered with a small note—a note of invitation; and as it was from a lady of no less consequence than Lady Merton, we must not treat her so lightly as to bring her in at the end of a chapter, but give her the dignity of the very commencement of our next.

CHAPTER III.

A NOTE OF INVITATION.

LADY MERTON was a very great lady, and although many people forgot all about it; she never did; but finding it very difficult to get those, her equals, to remember in what direction Charlotte Square, No. — lay, she lived a rather solitary life. “*Crème de la crème* or no society,” she said, and she was left with *no* society. But was not the company of her excellent son — her youngest born, her

Daniel—worth that of even dukes and duchesses of the present day—parvenus many of them with no descent of any value. Daniel! the well principled, high-minded gentleman, the excellent son, the good pastor (not *priest*—too Jewish, by far), the man whose opinions were deliberately formed on most subjects, and from whose judgment there was no appeal. Verily this youthful prophet was a good son in whatever else a courageous mind might venture to think him wanting. In obedience, respect, and devotion to a mother, none surpassed the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton.

No dinner party, even where the best claret was drunk, could detain

him from his mother, who waited for her accustomed game of picquet before retiring to that couch sacred to the nightly impression of the illustrious relict of the late Lord Merton, and of a daughter of the noble house of Maitland; so if Lady Merton adored her son, can we either wonder at or blame her? No request of his was ever listened to coldly, nor, if urged upon her, refused; so when now the Honourable and Reverend young man entered her boudoir, wearing rather an excited look, and at once plunged into an affair which evidently weighed upon his mind, it was not told to an unsympathising hearer.

“Dearest mother, I have a great

favour to entreat of you — a great favour, indeed, yet for my sake I hope you will grant it.”

“My dear boy, I think you know *me* pretty well, and I know *you* pretty well; no request you *would* make me *could* I hesitate to grant.”

“Thanks, mother, you are very good, but this request is quite an exceptional one. I would not make it but — but — owing to circumstances,” and the Hon. and Rev. Daniel stammered in very unusual fashion with him.

Lady Merton coloured slightly through her fair skin, and looked in astonishment at her stammering son.

“Mother! Miss Gray of whom you have heard me speak is an excellent woman, she has pleased me greatly in deferring an important matter to my judgment, and—and—I thought it would be such a reward if you would do *them* the honour of asking them to dine with you.”

Lady Merton listened attentively to this rather confused speech, and then inquired with very clear enunciation as to the meaning of the *plural pronoun* introduced directly after Miss Gray's name.

“Oh, I forgot, mother. Miss Gray has a niece, a very nice young person,” answered the young prophet, rather nervously. “I think, mother, she would please you; her manners

and appearance are so refined—she is quite nature's gentlewoman."

"Curious," said Lady Merton, drily, just as she might have said had she heard of a cat taking naturally to the water, or of a sea-gull taking up its abode inland, or of a Mr. Bogle drinking claret, or of any other anomaly which was more curious than pleasing—a freak of nature, a phenomenon that boded no good.

"Well, mother," continued Mr. Merton, feeling a little uncomfortable, "it would be such a pleasure to me to oblige Miss Gray, and I can think of nothing that could be so gratifying as this of your inviting them to dine with you."

Lady Merton bent her head in

acquiescence, and after receiving warm and grateful thanks from her dutiful son, she rose directly, and seating herself at her Davenport, she indited a note of invitation to Miss Gray; and it was this same note that reached that spinster's hands after her rather unseemly dance on her own carpet in Broughton Place, flat No. 3, after having mutilated her handsome gasalier.

"Annie, my child," said the gratified Miss Gray, (on opening the note, perfumed with violets, so suggestive of May Fair), "this is gratifying," and she proceeded to read it aloud.

Annie made no reply, but taking the note from her aunt's fingers, clam-

my now with excitement, she read it slowly over to herself, and then turned to leave the room.

“Come back, Annie,” cried Miss Gray, rousing herself, for she had sunk into a momentary reverie over *what she should wear*. “Come here, child, and let us decide on our dress. I must say this is a very handsome compliment Mr. Merton has paid me, but so like him, worthy honoured young man.”

“He is rewarding you, Aunt Jane, for consulting him how to dispose of poor me,” said Annie, slyly.

“Nonsense, nonsense, child, how you talk sometimes. What will you wear, dearest? Do you require a new dress, although I fear we could never

have it made up in time for to-morrow evening. Dear me, how late these big-wigs dine; eight o'clock, I believe is the hour."

"A quarter to eight o'clock, Aunt Jane. Do not bother about my dress. My white muslin with insertion is just freshly made up, and will answer beautifully. Depend upon it, we shall meet no one; Lady Merton asks us distinctly to dine with her and her son, and naming so early a day as to-morrow places this matter beyond a doubt; and as to your dress, Aunt Jane, you look lovely in your pearl-coloured, ribbed-silk, with black lace. The cap with crimson roses is quite new, and the colours are such beautiful contrasts! There now, Aunt, I

have arranged for us both; now write your answer to her ladyship."

"You are so rapid, Annie, you have confused me; but you are right to remind me to answer the note, for I declare I was forgetting that important part of the business." Miss Gray then seized a pen with trembling fingers, and wrote her answer in a neat though slightly tremulous hand, then ringing for Janet, she despatched it, saying with marked emphasis—

"For Lady Merton, Janet, in Charlotte Square."

From that moment until the important hour arrived for going to dinner, Miss Gray was in a flutter. She wandered from her own glass to Annie's room, and from Annie's

room back to her own glass. Annie's appearance was certainly Miss Gray's first consideration, her own the second. But Annie would not permit of her spending much time over her toilet. She never felt the least uneasy as to the effect she should produce, and consequently seldom failed to please. Besides, her beauty was unquestionable, her features were fine, her complexion unrivalled, and her whole manner so calm and cool, denoting such perfect repose.

“Annie with the Madonna face.” She deserved her name; and now, dressed in her simple white dress, her silken glossy hair rolled in loose coils round her perfect head, from which fell a soft, white gauze drapery,

she might have sat for a portrait of any famous Madonna.

“Annie, darling, you are a spotless-looking creature,” said poor heated Miss Gray, in her pearl-coloured silk and crimson roses.

Annie smiled, looked back in her mirror, smiled again a pleased assent apparently to her aunt’s praises, and taking up her gloves, reminded Aunt Jane that the carriage was waiting.

“My fan, Annie, I can’t find it,” hurriedly exclaimed Miss Gray, “what shall I do?”

“Here it is, aunt, under your hand,” answered Annie; and true enough it lay before her. Now Annie ran down the the scale staircase, tidily holding up her white dress, and get-

ting uninjured into the carriage, although the evening was wet, and was slowly followed by Miss Gray, tripping in her silk, and bawled after by Janet—

“Hold it up behind, ma’am; now it’s down in front, ma’am; the step is all muddy, ma’am, take care.”

“Yes, yes, Janet, I believe I am all right now,” and she stepped in, while Janet handed in her gloves and fan, groaning as she said,

“All right, ma’am, is that what you say? with the side breadth an inch thick in mud.”

“O Janet! what shall I do?” ejaculated Miss Gray in dismay.

“Hush, hush, Janet,” said Miss Jennings. “Do not mind her, aunt,

she always exaggerates so, it is barely speckled. I saw quite well what she means.”

Janet shook her head dissentingly, but the glasses being drawn up, the discussion could not be continued, and the carriage rolled on, depositing both ladies in Charlotte Square No. —.

Lady Merton having acceded to her son's request, had determined not to do it by halves, but act graciously throughout; and now rising as the ladies entered her drawing-room, she at once put poor Miss Gray's heart at rest.

. Painfully had it fluttered up that wide staircase, preceded by John in faded yet aristocratic liveries, the coronet on the gilt buttons. Annie

followed her aunt with her calm chiselled face, serene in its beauty, forming a striking contrast to her flushed one, and with her perfect presence of mind, seeing every surrounding object wrapt to her aunt in mist.

On the stair walls hung ancestral portraits, Puritans and Cavaliers strangely mingled (for the Mertons were not always partisans of the same cause), and close to the reception-rooms in the handsome corridor hung prominent in fresh oils and modern clerical costume, a painting of the youngest scion of that noble house, the Honourable and Reverend Daniel himself. It was an admirable likeness, with the small head thrown back far, as if it had been fixed

from infancy in a photographer's stand for a pose.

Annie smiled as she recognised the well-known features, and in consideration of her beauty, John (who saw the smile) smiled likewise, her being simply a "young person" accounted for this liberty he took. He was standing with the handle of the drawing-room door ready to turn, even as the ladies approached it quite close, for Lady Merton should not be kept with an open door a second longer than needful for a *young person* and her aunt. Now, however, he turns the bolt decidedly, yet not with a flourish such as would be suitable to admit the Duke of Blueblazes—neither was it done timidly, as

might be to unwelcome guests, but just with the fitting amount of *empressement*; for John was a well-bred servant, and knew perfectly how to announce a *young person* and her relations when expected.

Now advances to meet the ladies the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, with head thrown well back, and bearing so wonderful a resemblance to the portrait outside, that Annie involuntarily turned to make sure that the frame was not left vacant, and in doing so she received another approving look from John in the act of closing the door.

“Mother,” said the young prophet, taking the empty tips of Miss Gray’s

gloves between his fingers, "Mother, this is my friend, Miss Gray."

Lady Merton in her stiff silk, softened by Mechlin lace, and herself, softened by the desire to please her son, graciously gave Miss Gray the jewelled fingers of her right hand, bidding her welcome to her quiet home.

Miss Gray curtsied and squeezed the aristocratic palm, at which underbred warmth Lady Merton's face became slightly suffused. Annie—observant, cool Annie—saw her aunt's mistake, and profiting by it, curtsied low when presented in her turn, merely bending over the injured fingers. As she did so, she heard an eager voice exclaim in a loud whisper,

“Tell me, Merton, in heaven’s name, who is that angelic creature?”

“Calm yourself, Maitland, and do not be profane,” replied the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, “she is”—

Annie lost the finishing of the sentence it was spoken so low, but as she knew exactly who she was, it did not so much matter—still she was anxious to hear how Mr. Merton would have designated her.

Lady Merton was pleased with her graceful manner, and laying a hand on her bent head, she blest her, from which benediction Annie raised a blushing face, fitting expression of gratitude and humility Lady Merton thought, the fact being that this was

produced by young Charlie Maitland's burst of admiration.

"My nephew, Mr. Maitland—Miss Gray, Miss Jennings," introduced Lady Merton, and a remarkably handsome young fellow in *belted plaid* came forward, bowing low to both ladies, and giving Annie a look of apparently uncontrollable admiration.

"Miss Gray," continued Lady Merton, "my nephew has only lately joined, and as I have never seen him in uniform, to please me he has appeared in it this evening. I shall have few opportunities of seeing him again, for he leaves Edinburgh in one or two weeks to go to India with his regiment."

Miss Gray's reply was checked by

the announcement of dinner, and directly the Honourable and Reverend Daniel gave his arm to Lady Merton.

“Excuse us, Miss Gray,” said her ladyship, “but my son is so good as to consider this a privilege, and one he never willingly relinquishes. Dr. Duncan will you take care of Miss Gray?” (Dr. Duncan being simply the family physician had not been previously introduced.) “And my nephew—ah, I perceive he has already appropriated Miss Jennings. A true Maitland, Miss Jennings, always polite.”

Stately and slow swept that proud old lady through the corridor, followed by her guests, and on to the dining-room, which was at its upper

end. At the door stood John, with but one satellite, a miserable Buttons—shorn splendour for the house of Maitland. When Miss Maitland married Lord Merton she used to walk through a long file of liveried servants to every meal, but with his death went most of the livery to her eldest son James, a *mauvais sujet* who lived in Florence, beat his wife, and loved strange women; being altogether a very naughty man, and unlike in every way his youngest brother the Prophet, the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton. Was it any wonder then that his mother loved him so devotedly, or that Daniel himself occasionally wondered at his own sanctity?

And now he blessed the meat with long and well-rounded sentences, while Miss Gray folded her large white-gloved palms over her plate, and, tightening her eyelids, groaned a fervent amen to it (relic of the days when she lived in Gospel freedom), and Charley Maitland, naughty Charley, whispered close in Annie's ear,

“Our grace at mess is, what we are going to receive we all have to pay for;” and excited, blushing, trembling Annie laughed low.

Yes, she actually was trembling deliciously with a new sensation, under Charley's fearless, honest expression of admiration from his beautiful eyes. A blissful dinner truly was this to two of the guests at least; and if rather dull to

Lady Merton and her son, it was compensated for by the intense gratification Miss Gray evidently experienced. Mr. Merton was not quite happy under his cousin Charley's attentions to the *young person*, still, he argued inwardly, what else could fairly be expected from his handsome soldier cousin when put into close proximity to Annie with the Madonna face.

Less Madonna-like, however, than ever he had seen her, looked Annie this evening; she was more like to Hermione breathed into life by her Pygmalion. A handsome pair they were, which Mr. Merton acknowledged with a sigh, and Dr. Duncan with a desire that they two should some day be one.

Lady Merton perceived that her nephew was acting, as she supposed, like all young officers when opportunity occurs, making love and meaning nothing by it, and regarding the young person as sensible and not presuming, she supposed his conduct was quite *comprise* by her and Miss Gray.

To take notice of so vulgar a thing as flirting was beneath the dignity of Lady Merton, so she quite overlooked Charley's whispered discourse, addressing him pleasantly when occasion called for it, and accepting unnoticed his irrelevant answers.

The dinner was good, and served on old plate but half cleaned. John was old and lazy, and Lady Merton was delicate and old also, but the

glass was irreproachable (to this department the Honourable and Reverend Daniel paid special attention), and John did not remember ever receiving a rebuke from his young master but once, when he laid before him a claret jug looking very dilled. He never forgot the look of stern reproof, and the few words, very few though they were, he uttered, as he afterwards mentioned to Mrs. Sturrock, the house-keeper, in the privacy of her snug sitting-room, "I declare, Mrs. Sturrock, his countenance was like an angry prophet's, righteous in its wrath, and it seemed to melt my very marrow."

"Master Daniel likes his claret, and ever did, better than children

their mothers' 'milk," answered the ancient housekeeper, who had been at Daniel's birth, and was the first to hear his little wail.

After the ladies retired, Mr. Merton drank his wine a little freer than usual, for his spirits required it, and Mr. Maitland unconsciously poured out glass after glass of whatever wine came nearest to hand—Madeira or claret—for his life he could not have told of which he took the oftēnest.

"Best Madeira I ever tasted," said Dr. Duncan, letting down the precious liquid drop by drop to prolong the pleasure. "Do not you think so, Mr. Maitland?"

"Yes, capital," answered Charley, seizing the claret jug. "I will take

some more of it." * The Hon. and Rev. Daniel stretched out a hand and checked the young man.

"Do you really wish for Madeira, Charley? Do not expect to find it in a claret jug."

Charley looked up, awakened to realities, grew scarlet, and changed the bottle. Shortly after, Mr. Merton inquired of the gentlemen "Did they wish more wine?" This being negatived, they joined the ladies in the drawing-room.

They found Lady Merton napping, and Miss Gray presiding solemnly over her slumbers, while Annie, sitting in elegant repose on a sofa, looked over photographs. Charley at once bolted to her side, and Dr. Duncan, who had

drank enough to be jocose, poked the Hon. and Rev. Daniel in the ribs—

“A decided case, Mr. Merton, with our young friends. I think you may give out the banns next Sunday.”

Mr. Merton with hauteur shook off the familiar hand, and sitting between his mother, who had awakened directly on the gentlemen's entrance, and Miss Gray, he proposed their playing a rubber of whist.

“Mother, Miss Gray is a dead shot,” he said, with an effort at playfulness which did not suit his rigid muscles. “I speak from sad experience.”

“Miss Gray, what do you wish?” inquired Lady Merton, graciously.

“Whatever your Ladyship likes.”

“My mother likes her rubber,” answered her son, “and so does Miss Gray.”

“And so do I,” said the Doctor.

“Very well, that will just suit. Dr. Duncan, pray ring, you are close to the bell. Miss Jennings will kindly sing for us. I suppose she sings, Miss Gray. Everybody is musical in these days,” said Lady Merton.

“Annie sings very little, Lady Merton; she has a sweet voice, but no execution. I fear she cannot sing anything that could please you.”

“There is no music comparable to a ballad,” said Dr. Duncan.

“Annie,” said Miss Gray, raising

her voice, "do you think could you sing? Dr. Duncan seems to think a ballad worth listening to, and Lady Merton wishes for some music."

"I sing very little, but if Lady Merton wishes me to try I will with pleasure," replied Annie, calmly, not the least fluttered or discomposed at this request to sing in the house, and for the house of Merton.

Charley rose at once, delighted at the excuse to get her into the music-room, which communicated with the apartment they now occupied by folding doors, and then busied himself, contrary to Lady Merton's querulous attempts to stop him, lighting the candles and opening the piano.

"My dear Charley, the servants

are bringing in the card-table, and will do all that, and much quieter than you do—pray wait a moment.”

Now the card-table is made ready, parties selected, the cut for deal given, cards shuffled, the green shade placed between the candle and her ladyship’s eyes, and the game commences.

Lady Merton rigidly enforces the rule, that no conversation unconnected with the game is to be permitted, so silence reigns around the green baize cloth, and only spasmodic sentences are told off, such as—

“Your deal, Miss Gray.”

“No, Dr. Duncan, her ladyship dealt last, and consequently it is Mr. Merton’s.”

“No trump, Miss Gray?”

“No trump, Mr. Merton.”

“Daniel, my son, a revoke,” exclaims Lady Merton, who is Dr. Duncan’s partner. Daniel colours to the roots of his hair, and bowing low apologizes humbly to his partner.

Could Miss Gray heartily forgive anyone such an offence it would be surely Mr. Merton, but even she feels vexed, and says, with slight asperity—

“There is a knowing Scotch couplet we might all call to mind sometimes, Mr. Merton. It says :—

“‘The Deil flies off with the boy who lukes
For even a moment away from his bukes.’”

Miss Gray had perceived the Hon.

and Rev. Daniel Merton's wandering looks. Unfortunately he was so seated as to face the entrance to the music-room, and there he saw what he had no business to see, and for which he was summarily punished. As yet no strains divine had issued from that room, but sweet discourse was held therein.

Charley's and Annie's heads were bent together in efforts to lower a refractory music-stool that somehow could not be unscrewed, notwithstanding their united strength, and hand met hand there under cover of that great friendly piano; Charley having once caught, retained the soft yielding fingers, and on his knees before her, he showed off

his spruce new Highland dress, and she handled his scarf and admired his Cairngorms, and very close indeed met those young heads ; and voices pitched so low as theirs must need, to be heard, hold very near communication, and Annie's pretty palm was pressed to the young soldier's lips.

Mr. Merton saw, felt—in fact, knew all about what was going on ; and need we now wonder why he, the prince of whist players, revoked and incurred Miss Gray's well merited censure ?

Lady Merton observed her son's involuntary glances towards the music-room, which recalled her to a remembrance of its quiet occupants, and why

they should be there, for what purpose still unfulfilled.

“I thought we were to have had some music from your niece, Miss Gray; it was for that purpose I had the pianoforte opened.”

“Annie, Annie, what are you about, child!” exclaimed Miss Gray, so excited by her game as to be forgetful of the modulated voice she had assumed since her entrance into Charlotte Square.

Annie made no reply, but hurriedly commenced to sing “Willie we have missed you.”

“Sweet song,” said Dr. Duncan; “there is nothing to equal the plaintiveness of our Scotch ballads.”

“Game laws,” Lady Merton said,

playfully holding up her first finger, ornamented by an oblong-shaped diamond ring. "We shall take out legal proceedings against you—a fine for the next breach of the laws."

Annie's sweet voice now made itself heard singing no end of Jacobite songs, all in praise of *Charley! Charley!* and beside her knelt the young Highlander, on whom she shyly and tenderly looked down at every refrain of *Charley! Charley!* As the card party broke up after counting gains and losses, Charley staggered to his feet, madly, blindly, in love.

Annie swept into the drawing-room with eyes so lustrous, that Doctor Duncan improvised a compliment on the spot in these words :

“With eyes so sparkling, and with cheeks so bright,
Whence comes this vision on my sight?”

Mr. Merton glanced towards her, and looked away with pained feelings.

“Who won?” inquired Annie, easily.

“Her ladyship and Doctor Duncan, dear,” returned Miss Gray, feeling not quite so cheery as when commencing her game.

“You were badly treated, I must say, Miss Gray,” said Lady Merton, laughing—she was in high spirits at her victory, for with her son as adversary it was what she had not expected.

“Come, now, Miss Gray, and take some refreshment. Daniel, of what

are you thinking, not to give Miss Gray your arm. *I* never take anything stronger at night than a glass of water, or eat, except a cup of gruel in my dressing-room, but *I* am no rule for anyone, and you especially need something after your good beating, Miss Gray."

But Miss Gray was not to be prevailed on to partake of any of the good things provided by Lady Merton, nor Annie either, so there remained nothing to be done but to take leave, which they proceeded to do, Lady Merton thanking Miss Gray for coming to her "*poor house, and on such an evening.*"

Miss Gray could not go away without making up with her pastor. She

had felt a little cross, but on their way down stairs she shook his hand in her own cordial fashion, saying—

“ I must part friends, Mr. Merton.”

“ Then you forgive me ?”

“ Indeed I do.”

“ Thanks,” he answered, then drew back from the carriage door to allow of Miss Jennings’ entrance.

Closely shawled, followed that young lady, leaning on Charley’s arm, who now audaciously slipped it round her slender waist to assist her in, and uttering a mournful good-night, he slowly returned to the house for his cloak and cap ; then lighting his cigar, he kissed the tips of his fingers to

Cousin Daniel, and strolled through Charlotte Square.

* “A charming evening, Annie, hadn’t we?” inquired the aunt, on their arrival in Broughton Place. Then examining herself in the mirror over the drawing-room mantel-piece, she asked Annie how she liked her cap.

“I am afraid the roses are too red for my cheeks—what do you say, child? Did I look very flushed all the evening?”

“No, aunt,” said Annie, languidly.

“You looked lovely, child. I don’t think I ever saw you appear to so great advantage. I can tell you Lady Merton evidently admires you. I observed her eyes very often fastened on you.”

“She was very good,” answered Annie, with indifference.

“And Doctor Duncan was quite struck with you. I heard him whispering something about you to Mr. Merton.”

“Indeed!” and Annie diligently folded up her sash and gloves, and smoothed her gauze lappets.

“What a handsome creature young Mr. Maitland is, my heart warms to the plaid.”

Good-night, auntie. I am very tired.”

“Good-night, my pet, you do speak languidly. There, tuck into bed as fast as your little nimble feet will take you.”

And the aunt kissed her repeatedly,

from which embraces Annie shrank. Aunt Jane was in fact making of her niece's lips a kind of palimpsest, and as the young lady much preferred the original inscription, she resented the treatment accordingly.

To bed she went, and to dream softly, deliciously of an eternal flow of honey, with the moon always at the full, and of an everlasting supply of tartan scarfs. Charley wandered about the streets of Edinburgh for an hour or so, and then finding himself in the precincts of the Calton Hill, he hailed a cab, and got driven home to barracks, where he, like his beloved, sought rest, and dreamed also, of hybla honey and great round moons,

lighting up wherever he turned a sweet Madonna face, the face of Annie Jennings.

CHAPTER IV.

THE RESULTS OF AN INVITATION TO A DINNER
IN HIGH SOCIETY.

WE might correctly head our chapter with the quotation of "What great events from little causes spring," and apply it to our story, for insignificant a matter as at first sight appears to have been Lady Merton's invitation, it was big with consequences, but in stating this have we really gone to the root of the matter?

No, certainly far from it, we should first descend into the depths of the heart of an honourable and reverend young prophet, the young man Daniel.

Have we a right to disclose his secret — a secret not even acknowledged to himself, yet one which conscience occasionally displayed before him, making his cheeks to tingle, and *almost* bending down his head.

Truly, Annie with the Madonna face was a dangerous damsel to look on, and Mr. Merton's opportunities, nay, obligations, were many to draw near to her.

Her aunt was his particular sheep, lost for ever to her early shepherd,

and led into green pastures ; and this young person, led by the old sheep to share the same green pastures, to be placed under the same pastor's care, was his especial duty to watch over.

And dangerous duty it was !

Now, my readers, we are placed in the right way of understanding why the respectable party with the long line of conservatories at Granton was refused, and why Mr. Merton's gratitude was so great to Miss Gray for taking him to consult with on this important subject, and why she should have been so rewarded as to be invited to dine in Charlotte Square.

Alas ! short-sighted man ! Alas ! for

the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton. From the retired shop-keeper at Granton you have saved sweet Annie Jennings, but into what dangers, trials, and sorrows have you led her. Sorrows and dangers, indeed! to more than her—you have brought the noble houses of Merton and Maitland into peril, and you have changed the current of two young lives.

Oh, Daniel! Daniel! truly your offences have been great; why—why did you burn your fingers in that low matter of the Granton tradesman? Why should Annie Jennings with the Madonna face be anything to you!

Yet stay, let us not be hasty

to condemn. Is there not a fate in marriage? If fate has anything to do with the concerns of mortals——

But why follow it?

Because we are answered, it is in the nature of fate to be followed.

I suppose so—I am no logician, yet we are told that love is omnipotent—so now comes the puzzle. If love be omnipotent, and fate must be followed, we ask, are love and fate always in agreement?

To this we can reply decisively *no!* Then we must have a choice which to obey—

“Then I say,
Love lead the way,

Fate stand aside,
Thee I deride;
Dear love lead me,
Thy slave I'll be."

Old fool, I hear said around me. Peut-être, je suis parfaitement satisfait, content, heureux, for I hear a breath, a murmur from a sunny land, it seems to come to me from far over the seas, with the fragrance of citron and olives and myrrh. A voice, a child's sweet voice. It is Raby. She says, rather she sings, "Right, Mr. Leslie Gore, for whatever else is false in life, love is true."

Bravo ! I exclaim, quite elated with Raby's approbation. (You shall hear more of her anon), and I proceed with my tale.

How did Annie feel on awakening after the momentous evening spent in Charlotte Square, No. —? And how did Charley? In some respects they felt alike, but in others very dissimilarly indeed.

Annie's sensations were varied; she felt that something very unusual had occurred, and at the same time something very happy. And as reason resumed its sway in that cool head of hers, troubled thoughts arose of the row there would be in the Merton family. Then she thought with a vague kind of relief that nothing after all might come of it, and when she tried to imagine that all these soft happy feelings were but the produce of a dream, she wept, remembering

Charley's handsome face and winning ways.

"But I shall see him again," she murmured, "for his last words were, 'Remember, bonnie Annie, St. Anthony's Well is our trysting place to-morrow.'"

At this thought, Annie dried her eyes, rose, and dressed, pondering over whether she should confide to Aunt Jane the little assignation she had tacitly agreed to, and meant to keep.

"It would horrify her, poor auntie, if she knew of my presumption, and why should I ask the poor old soul?"

So charitably she decided on not vexing poor Aunt Jane, but to go out

on the sly to meet her highland lover.

Thus we see that Annie's sky was not all *couleur de rose*, but mixed with clouds both black and grey, whereas Charley's was pure light—light born of love, seeing no speck because it will not see it.

“Bah!” he said; “what obstacles are there? None that a brave heart can't conquer. Annie, if need be, will wait for me patiently like an angel, as she is, and Daniel, who is a first rate fellow, will buy up my steps for me like a brick.”

So hopeful, enthusiastic Charley dreamed while smoking his soothing cigar, pacing to and fro the barrack yard. Seated on a bench with a

novel in his hand, sat a brother officer of Charley's, who was with amusement watching him, and observing the abstracted look in his dark blue eyes, he drew his conclusions accordingly, and tapping Charley as he passed him with his cane, said—

“Hipped, old boy.”

Charley started as if he were a delicate female, exclaiming warmly,

“I beg your pardon.”

“Oh, not at all,” answered the other.

“Tell me, is the cut deep?”

“Deep, do you ask, Elliot?” said Charley, taking the cigar from his mouth, “I tell you it is a cut to the bone.”

“And the inamorata, does she respond?”

“Elliot,” replied Charley solemnly, “there are some subjects too sacred to be spoken of. In consideration of our tried friendship, I tell you of my own feelings, but this is the limit to my confidence. When, *if* I should say preliminaries were arranged, I would be requesting you to be my best man.”

Elliot laughed.

“So far gone indeed? Now tell us the name; do, Charley, there’s a good boy. Anna Sophia? Wilhelmina Amelia? Mary-anne? Angelica? eh—none of these?”

Charley shook his head.

“Too high flying; well, then, I descend from my Pegasus and will guess down. Jane? Eliza?”

“No, Elliot, wrong.”

Elliot stared hard at him, as he said, “it must be Bridget, then?”

“No,” answered the other with dignity; “you are quite too absurd, her name is the softest, sweetest going; it is Annie,” and Charley named the “one loved name” so sweetly, so lackadaisically that Elliot mimicked it, repeating mincingly, “Annie.”

Poor Charley coloured to the ears, and very much offended, strutted off, leaving Elliot in peals of laughter.

Charley was an orphan, and the Hon. and Rev. Daniel Merton was his guardian. Guardian to a property which, at his father's coming of age, was valued at five thousand per an-

num, and at his death yielded a bare hundred.

Mr. Maitland was a speculator, one of those unhappy mortals the effect of whose losses is to make them speculate still deeper, hope rising in proportion to failure, in inverse ratio to common sense. When too late, he saw the mistakes he had made, and to provide against his son being led into the same, so far as he could, he committed the deeply-dipped estate to the care of his sister's youngest son, Daniel, even in those early days famed for his wisdom, and willed his son not to be of age to inherit before his five and twentieth birthday, giving the property a longer time than otherwise could be for restora-

tion, even partial though it might only be.

To Charley, his darling boy, he left two hundred a year, until he should become master of all, but giving full powers to his nephew to use his own discretion in pushing him forward in his profession, the choice of which his little boy had already made.

Under such a constructed will poor Charley was left pretty much in his cousin, the Honourable and Reverend Daniel's power, and so it behoved him to keep in his good graces. To do the prophet justice, he made both a faithful and a kind guardian. From many a scrape he had with good-nature extricated Charley, many

a twenty pound note had found its way from the guardian's hands to the ward's pockets over and above his just income, and besides this with clear mathematical head he had been cleverly managing his little property, which was now beginning to rise from its heavy liabilities, and was paying treble to what it had been when first intrusted to his fostering care.

Charley, now thinking over these things, more than ever he had done before, strode down the Castle Hill, taking a short cut through Prince's Street Gardens, and entered Charlotte Square. He thought, poor fellow! he would try if his cousin's pulses beat at all in unison with his heart's beats,

and if so to tell his tale and throw himself on his compassion.

Knocking at the door, he found the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton was at home and in his study alone; so far success was Charley's, but alas! here it ended. Daniel was dry, unsympathetic, and very occupied.

“If you have any business in hand, Charley, speak it out, for I am particularly engaged this morning; just see, all these papers,” laying one hand on a large packet, “and these,” pointing to another, “papers connected with our properties—yours, Charley, and my mother's—and all to be looked over before the visit of my solicitor to-day.”

As Charley remained for a moment silent, trying to collect his scattered faculties, his cousin viewed him superciliously, quite in a manner *de haut en bas*; the mode of carrying his head, hereditary stamp of the Merton blood, always gave him something of this appearance even in cases where reality was wanting; but in the present instance his looks were the index of his mind, he felt haughtily disposed towards his young cousin, who unconsciously had wounded him in a tender quarter.

“Pray, Cousin Charley, speak out; do you want money? Any fresh gaming debts? I do not approve of these continual scrapes you get into. However, always tell me of ’em, and

never owe a debt to a tradesman, or *friend* even, before your relations give you up. I will now *lend* you a small sum. *Give* you anything of what you probably consider your own already I *won't*, and for this reason, I am responsible for a solemn promise made to your dead father to nurse your estate to the best of my ability, and to watch over you. How much do you need?"

"Nothing, Cousin Daniel—nothing in the way of money; I thought to have had a quiet talk with you."

"Impossible, my dear fellow," replied the Honourable and Reverend Daniel with rather more heat than the occasion seemed to call for; "some

other time, or go up and talk to my mother; she gives excellent advice, none better, if it be advice you require; besides, advice is a thing I never give. I never ask it, and I believe none ever takes it. Day-day, Cousin Charley, leave your old guardian to his musty papers, and go spin your top;" and summarily he dismissed poor puzzled Charley.

In the hall he found himself at the outer side of his guardian's door, scarcely aware how he got there, whether put out, or by his own volition he had walked out. Now, whether should he go upstairs to Lady Merton or into the pleasant, cordial-looking streets? where the carriages were rolling so busily, and the ladies seated

up in them were so prettily conscious of their charms in their gay dresses, yet not one among a hundred of them worthy of being named in the same breath with Annie Jennings.

Charley's thoughts having reached this point, he clapt his hat on his head and rushed into the streets.

Once in the free air he breathed better; Cousin Daniel, the young prophet, had paralysed his faculties, and frozen the current of his blood which had been running so warmly. He had gone to him intending to pour out his inmost soul, but somehow the Honourable and Reverend Daniel was not in the humour to receive his confession; he objected by

a hard demeanour, a glazed eye, to view that sight which Charley yearned to show, and treated him contemptuously—he, a Highland soldier, to be shown such scorn, and turned away with the insulting recommendation to go spin his top.

Charley fumed and fretted, chafed like a young horse newly bitted, the more he thought over these things, and then frantically flew to a trysting place, albeit an hour before the time, to wait for his expected companion, sweet Annie Jennings.

St. Anthony's Well was the lovers' chosen spot for meeting, an arrangement which they had made the previous evening; and here, on the rising ground behind the ruined chapel,

Charley laid him down to cool his fevered brow before his mistress should appear.

Here he lay, and registered a vow that he would marry none other than Annie with the Madonna face, even should he have to wait for her for four long years. Interminable these appeared to the ardent young man, an eternity, save that from experience he knew that they would end.

“Then I shall be my own master,” he soliloquized.

“But will Annie wait?”

Feverishly the young man revolved this, and could not answer, yea or nay, when a flutter of garments and an active tread met his ears; and starting to his feet, he turned to

meet his saint, Annie with the Madonna face.

“Oh thanks, a thousand thanks,” he murmured repeatedly, seizing both her hands, and then sinking on his knees he pressed them to his lips.

“I fear I am acting foolishly, wrongly, perhaps, in meeting you thus,—but I did not like,—I did not know exactly what I promised or you might expect from last night, and then you are leaving town and this country so soon, Lady Merton says,—I thought it would not much signify,” said Annie rather confusedly, the more so owing to Charley’s rapt gaze into her face, from which he never moved his eyes while she spake.

“Not much signify!” repeated Charley. “Sweetest, dearest! oh, how I love you.”

“Mr. Maitland, this is great nonsense you are talking, and a proper punishment to me for meeting you here. I am really angry. How can you talk so and expect me to believe it when you know me only a few hours?”

“Oh, Annie,” mournfully said young Charley, “does not your own heart tell you how short a time it takes for one heart to find its mate? There is an instinct in such things requiring no time to learn its lesson and spell it out. Annie, I am young, but one thing I know to be true as Gospel, that love is eternal and has nought

to say to time. It is born complete, and in a moment, and never dies. Annie, beloved, does your heart tell you nothing of this; answer me, sweetest?"

Annie was bewildered, and did not well know how to respond to this eloquent and impassioned speech; she was touched by it, and pleased, and very much admired the glowing handsome face turned up to hers, and the beautiful sunny blue eyes, and over the hill they wandered, his arm round her slender waist.

Poor Charley was in Elysium, and Annie at the gates of it. Oh, what a pity such moments cannot last; will they ever, when time is no more? We have them but once in this life, the

sweet pure moment when we *know* we would willingly die for the beloved one, when self is absorbed in another. Reflex of the Deity, such as man was framed, such as he was before that tremendous fall, when man, created He him, "in the image of God created He him."

Such at least is woman's love when her love is perfect. She *has* shown herself capable of resigning him she loves to another, in believing it to be for his happiness, although the effort is only just within her strength and sometimes beyond her physical powers ; and she sinks to gain her great reward before her span of life is spun. Charley thought himself at all events capable of heroic deeds in behalf of

her with the Madonna face ; and Annie in her calm soul and proud heart resolved to live for Charley, and Charley only, despite of the upbraiding horror-stricken faces of the long ancestral lines of Merton and Maitland. The portraits in the gallery of Charlotte Square seemed turned wrathfully on her, the *young person*, who dared to think of sullyng their pure blood by the mixture of a Jennings' puddle.

Horror ! they actually appear to pale under it—the oils grow weak, getting muddled into one dingy yellow colour, and seem preparing to leave their canvas and their fallen house, as rats do (excuse me the comparison, oh ye shades !) But revered ancestors, keep up heart, if

you ever had any; do not yet cry lost! lost! Love is against you, but on the other side, converged to one point, strong in the double united stream of Merton and Maitland blood, stand two worthy scions of those illustrious houses—Alexandra Augusta Agnes Maitland, Lady Merton (*née* Maitland), and the Honourable Reverend Daniel Merton, the young prophet. While these stand in the breach, honour is not lost.

Encouraged by us, the portraits, with a hurried, shuffling sound, get shaken back in their frames, and resume their ordinary colours, the ochre taking only its proper share.

Every day for eight days our lovers met in secret, sipped the sweets of

love in secret, and as stolen pleasures are proverbially sweeter than those gained by orthodox means, they enjoyed them all the more.

Charley spoke confidently of his future, his courage becoming great, strengthened by love. Yet he could not resolve to tell his Guardian Prophet of his engagement to Madonna Annie, although two other visits he paid in Charlotte Square. He saw Lady Merton both times, but only had a glimpse of the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, who just looked into the drawing-room, hat in hand ready, and in a hurry to go out.

“Good-bye, mother, for a few hours; I am off on fifty engagements. How d’ye do, Charley? When do

you start? I shall remit to you, quarterly, fifty pounds, and mind, keep my mother and me *au fait* as to your doings. Drink only claret; all other red wines are most injurious in hot climates."

"Surely, Daniel, I shall see you again. I have so many things to say to you, and to ask your advice about."

"Dine here any day you wish. Mother, is he not welcome?"

"Certainly, Charley. You do not need an invitation to my house."

"Dear aunt, you are very good. To-day we have a few friends at mess, and to-morrow I am engaged to dine with the Buchanans; Elliot—you know Elliot, Daniel—he is anxious

I should see Lady Julia, who is a widow now, with one little boy."

"Lady Julia Buchanan, who was the Duke of St. Ives' daughter?" Charley bowed assent. "My dear boy, keep your engagement by all means. It is important for a young man starting in life to make nice friends."

"Arrange with my mother, Charley. I really am pressed for time," cut in the Honourable Daniel, who then vanished, the head being the last part of him visible.

Lady Merton talked, for the rest of the visit, of the advantages accruing from good old blood, and the necessity for the few, comparatively speaking, *vrais sains* to keep themselves so, taking as a peg to hang

all this on the invitation of Lady Julia Buchanan to Mr. Elliot to bring his young friend to dine with her.

Charley did not receive much edification from all this long-winded discourse, but an inward conviction was borne in on him that it would be more than useless, baneful rather, to confide to her his love and determination to marry Annie Jennings.

“This is Monday, and you leave on Thursday I think, Charley. Monday and Tuesday you are engaged; come on Wednesday and dine here, when you can have your talk with Daniel.”

“Unfortunately I can’t, Aunt Merton.” Lady Merton raised her brows,

and Charley coloured. "We are giving a ball on that evening—a farewell to all our friends in Edinburgh who have been so kind to our regiment."

"Indeed! well, I can suggest nothing now, I fear, Charley. You see how busy Daniel is all day. The evening is the only time even I have any conversation with him."

"I will call in on Thursday, dearest aunt, to receive your blessing; as to Daniel, I must only write." And Charley then got off, leaving Lady Merton looking very stately.

Miss Gray and her niece had paid a visit a few days previously to Lady Merton, but they did not find her nearly so gracious as when she was exulting in her whist victory. Her son, the Ho-

nourable and Reverend, had been instinctively impressed with the belief that Cousin Charley had won the love of Annie Jennings, and unconsciously communicated his own cooled, or rather, properly speaking, angry feelings, to his lady mother. The Jennings and Gray names had been hardly mentioned by them, and yet a mutual dislike was being entertained by both mother and son. So all Miss Gray's amenities, and Annie's grace and deferential manner, were utterly lost on Lady Merton, and unproductive of any cordial return.

Annie had chiefly spent the fifteen minutes passed in making that call in looking over a photograph album which contained some three or four likenesses

of Charley taken at various stages of his young life.

Two water-colour sketches of him as a baby, with coral bells, a gift of Lady Merton, and another *ætat* four and a half, seated on a rocking-horse. Then came a photograph of the Eton boy, standing beside a real horse, with bridle in hand, ready to mount; and lastly, Charley in full Highland costume, a portrait taken quite lately, and a capital likeness.

“Miss Jennings,” said the old lady keenly, “you appear to have found an interesting study.”

Annie blushed faintly, answering, “it is only a book of photographs.”

“What a pleasant art photography is to be sure,” said Miss Gray. “Show

me that book, dear Annie, I am so fond of looking at pictures of even entire strangers; we stop and look in at the very shop windows, Lady Merton. Ah, here I perceive a likeness of your handsome young nephew."

"Yes; did you see it, Miss Jennings?" inquired Lady Merton, drily.

"Yes, it is a good likeness," answered Annie, calmly.

"Mr. Maitland has been very polite to us, Lady Merton," said Miss Gray. "He has sent us cards for his ball on the 15th. Is your ladyship going?"

"Well, not exactly; my ball days are past, Miss Gray."

"Of course, Lady Merton; but

this being your nephew's ball I thought it might be an exceptional case."

"I am not as romantic as you suppose, Miss Gray; and my nephew would prefer, I should say, the ball-room being filled with the young and gay rather than with creatures such as I, whose life hangs on a thread. I hope Miss Jennings will enjoy her dance, and meet with a suitable and a profitable partner. Good morning, Miss Gray; good morning, Miss Jennings."

And she bowed them out of the room without having waited for the ladies to rise of their own free will, or her visitors to be shown the door.

“Her ladyship does not look as well by daylight, Annie, as at night. I don’t think that she was in a good humour either.”

“No, I think not,” musingly replied Annie, who was wondering in her secret soul if Lady Merton had had any ground for her unpleasing manner to her and her aunt; her parting words were said, she thought, in a significant tone, as if more was meant than met the ear.

CHAPTER V.

DEPARTURE OF THE — REGIMENT OF HIGHLANDERS.

THE ball night arrived. Edinburgh was in a state of intense excitement. If the gallant regiment of Highlanders slaughter as successfully on the field of battle as they have done in the many drawing-rooms in Edinburgh, verily theirs will be a successful career. For on this, the eve of their departure, the cry that went up was something like to that heard in the land of Egypt on

the night of the last and greatest plague. Not one house escaped; but in this instance it was not always the first-born who was the victim, and we trust the killed meant only the Irishman's *killt*—prostration for a time.

A splendid ball it was. Carte blanche the officers gave the trades-people, while dressmakers and milliners exhausted fancy to meet the wishes and orders of their fair customers. Haute noblesse *honoured* the ball with their presence, and *basses* citoyennes *graced* it with their presence, and among them, pre-eminent as the fairest of the fair, was Annie Jennings—fair as ever sun shone on, or that gas chandeliers tried to spoil.

Dressed in her snowy floating drapery, she might have been seen half the evening in the arms of Charley Maitland, at once the happiest and most miserable of mortals.

“Annie,” he murmured, “never forget me.”

“Never, Charley!”

“Be true to me, darling, though seas divide us.”

“Can you doubt me, Charley?”

“I should be a brute to do so, sweetest; but I feel at once so happy, and, O, so miserable!”

“Charley, you are a goose! don’t I say I shall never forget you, and four years is not a lifetime, they will soon be over; so now be a wise boy and enjoy the present.”

“I enjoy, I revel in the present, but, oh, the future I cannot face.”

“Yes, Charley, but listen! there is that delicious valse beginning again, shall we take a turn?” Then off they whirled again, Annie up to the last continuing fresh and unblown.

“She is a vampire,” said Elliot, who had been watching her during the evening with great interest, on account of his friend Charley.

“She is a vampire,” he repeated to his fair friend Lady Julia, *who to please him* had thrown off her crape and appeared at his ball. Lady Julia had promised conditionally.

“Swear to me that you will not induce me to dance if I go to

this ball, Mr. Elliot ; the world is so ill-natured, they remember to the very hour how long one is a widow, and make no allowances for circumstances which affect the loss sustained, and that properly should regulate the conduct.”

“True, indeed, Lady Julia, but be above the world’s opinion. Take it at its worth, which is nothing. Your friends know how poor Buchanan was forced on you, and what a wretched valetudinarian he was, and years older than you.”

Lady Julia sighed, and consented to appear at the ball, though she would not dance.

“I am going simply to oblige you,

Mr. Elliot, so pray consent to this my little weakness."

And she called her maid, to consult about the dress *convenable* for two opposites—dress for a husband six months dead, and dress for a ball-room.

The girl looked puzzled, albeit she was French; she requested time, an hour say, to reflect.

"Not longer, Annette," said her ladyship, looking at her watch; "I shall be *une pitoyable* until you decide."

"Une heure, miladi, je ne demande pas plus."

Annette kept her word, and returned triumphant, her artist brain had pictured a dress at once sombre

and light, suggestive of sentiment for the past and sentiment for the present. So much we inform our readers, but details are inexpedient, obviously so; for we do not approve of widows of six months' standing appearing at balls; no matter (we are moral) of what age or state of health the late husbands were, and we will not give any countenance to such conduct by describing minutely Mademoiselle Annette's artful triumph.

Lady Julia was enchanted when dressed in her cloudy raiment, through which the mellow tint gave promise of bright days yet in prospect for her. She embraced her soubrette, kissed her lovely boy's brow lightly as he lay sleeping peacefully in his little bed,

and flying *down* stairs she met young Elliot flying *up* stairs to meet her. He had come to protect her into the ball-room, as, naturally, lonely she would feel at this her entrance into public life after such a loss as she had sustained.

“Remember, Mr. Elliot,” she said, slightly pressing the arm on which she leaned; “I will not dance, on this I have quite made up my mind; I will not valse under twelve months.”

“Heavens above!” exclaimed Elliot, “but your ladyship shall be obeyed.” And so it happened that he had leisure while squiring Lady Julia about, to remark on his friend Charley and his fair partner.

“She is nothing less than a vampire. See, Lady Julia, she is fresh as a Mayflower, and it five o’clock in the morning.”

“Disgusting!” replied Lady Julia, enviously, “it argues such want of feeling.”

“If so—and its opposite is shown by flushed and wearied faces—by Jove, what a deal of feeling we have got stoved up here in these rooms,” said Elliot, as crowds of jaded forms filed past them.

“Time for me to retire, Mr. Elliot,” said the lady, the prudence of such a step being suggested to her by his remarks, although she knew her dress was uncrushed and her cheeks were neither flushed or pallid. Being no

sharer in the dance served the former, and the slightest soupçon of rouge preserved her from the latter.

As they passed from the ball-room to the smaller reception-rooms they encountered stragglers now and again, couples seated on benches behind doors and curtain drapery, and turn where he would, Elliot perceived that a brother officer made one of the two, all engaged in taking tender leave of inconsolable maidens.

“We may call these gentlemen *the forlorn hope*, I think, Mr. Elliot,” wittily remarked Lady Julia.

“Look, Lady Julia,” he whispered, “there is the vampire again;” Lady Julia affectedly shuddered and hurried her steps. There indeed was poor

Charley, the picture of misery, trying to say a last farewell to his Annie, his saint.

“Poor Charley is terribly cut up,” Elliot said, “India, however, will do him all the good in the world, he will meet there plenty of vampires, and since that is his taste he will be sure to be pleased.”

Then, handing Lady Julia into her carriage, he thanked her gallantly for doing him the honour of coming to his ball.

“No other gentleman in the regiment would have induced me to do so,” she murmured, leaving her ungloved hand in his for a moment.

“I know it, Lady Julia, and a thousand thanks,” responded Mr. Elliot,

kissing the white hand; then ordering the coachman to drive on, he returned to the ball-room. And now a very commonplace accident occurred to him, very common indeed, yet it decided his lot in life; fate had placed it aside until the fitting hour should come, and behold it is at hand.

Mr. Elliot had had no dancing; to Lady Julia's side he had kept all that evening, he would fain have had it otherwise, but in duty he was bound to her so long as she desired, and somehow she had kept him, although she had constantly said with the prettiest air of unselfishness possible—

“Pray, Mr. Elliot, do not mind me; do find a partner for a valse, I can take care of myself quite properly now

—I am an old matron—no one will care to look twice having looked once.” And Lady Julia sighed. “I can think of my little cherub at home, who perhaps I should not have left—but ah! Mr. Elliot, you were the serpent in my Eden,” added the lady, playfully holding up a slender finger fitted into an exquisite kid glove.

“Lady Julia, unless you drive me from you I will not desert you, you came here to please me, and I should be ungrateful to leave you.”

And manfully he kept to her side, and stayed his feet from the mazy dance to which the enchanting strains of the band invited him. But now she was gone, he might get one gallop down that glorious length of waxed floor, and

rushing up stairs he seized on the first girl he met of his acquaintance, and scarcely waiting for her consent he whirled her down the room at full speed ; and as he did he so slipt from no apparent cause (invisible fate standing by) and broke the small bone of his leg just above the ankle ; he had presence of mind to disengage his partner, who spun on alone for a few seconds, then she turned to assist poor Elliot who lay groaning. The doctor was called to his assistance, who pronounced it a bad accident, and said Mr. Elliot must by no means think of proceeding with his regiment to India. In vain Mr. Elliot remonstrated, the surgeon was unchangeable in his opinion, consequently Mr. Elliot must remain for

a few days in Edinburgh, and then move to his father's house in Perthshire.

Mr. Elliot, senior, was a clergyman with but one child, George Elliot, Lieutenant in Her Majesty's Highlanders; his mother was dead, and the Rev. Mr. Elliot was now married to a sister of Mr. Buchanan, Lady Julia's late husband. Thus there was formed a connexion between the Elliots and Buchanans, which we trust will justify Lady Julia in our reader's eyes for flying to George Elliot's bed-side, and nursing him through that very painful accident which he had met with.

In a few days, however, she was relieved at her interesting post, for Mr.

Elliot came to Edinburgh to fetch his son to country air, where he should receive every sort of care from his excellent mother-in-law. When good, kind Mr. Elliot heard of Lady Julia's kindness to his son (although he could not approve of her going to the ball) he warmly invited her and her little son, Billy, to his Highland home.

“Come down with us, Lady Julia, Dorothea will be glad to see you, and we shall feed your little Billy off the farm. He shall drink the milk as it runs into the pails, and eat the best of my black face sheep, and sip up the heather honey until his little sides drop fatness.”

This prospect was pleasant, and

Lady Julia eagerly caught at it; but her view was even a brighter one, and of this Mr. Elliot, senior, had not had even a glimpse.

She saw—but surely it is needless to say what she saw in the distance. A country house is sometimes, and under certain circumstances, as pleasant a place as can be conceived, peculiarly suited now to Lady Julia's mitigated affliction, so she sweetly accepted the Reverend Mr. Elliot's openhearted invitation; and leaving her ball dress behind carefully folded in sheets of silver paper and strewn with lavender, she and her little Billy with Mademoiselle Annette joined the two Elliots next morning, and with them journeyed west.

Mr. George Elliot had the grief of hearing his band announce the departure of his regiment, playing their favourite and heartless tune of "The girl I left behind me," as they marched down the old Castle hill, with knapsacks packed ready for their long journey. With due order they all got into place in the express train prepared for them, and puff, puff, off they crept, slowly, slowly, until the steam was up, and then, like the wind, they rushed along out of sight, that gallant — cruel — heart-slaying — Highlanders.

Many a silly girl at the sound buried her face in her pillow, weeping—weeping tears—salt tears—that would not be controlled, confiding them to that

soft and most comfortable article of furniture; and yet the most wretched among them was happy compared to our poor Charley.

Four long years to have to live through without his saint. O heavens! what a trial. But he would write daily to her, keep a journal, talk to her, call her by tenderest names; and then the answers to these blessed gifts—her thoughts, her words made his for ever, confided to his keeping: better, far better, than speech; heaven while listened to, but then, what remained?—echoes, shadows, like to Sodomite apples; while, on the contrary; letters are tangible things—to be handled—read—kissed—kept—taken out now and again when memory requires a help;

again, how one can possess such treasures *ad infinitum* get up a little store of them; and actually hold back time, that is always seeking to elude our grasp. At these thoughts Charley brightened up, looked out of window, observed with clear vision that the fields were green and the sky was blue. By the time he had reached Southampton he was in a very rational frame of mind.

Returning home from the ball, Miss Gray had put one or two questions to her niece, who was pertinaciously keeping her head out of window.

“Annie, who were your partners this evening? I did not see you dancing with anyone but young Mr. Maitland.”

No reply.

“Annie, my love, do you hear me?
Who were your partners?”

“Mr. Maitland, Aunt Jane,” replied the young lady, without altering her position.

“Who else, Annie?”

Silence again. Aunt Jane looked vexed, and was about to repeat her question a little sharply, when she observed a heavy drop roll down Annie’s cheek and break on her satin sash.

“Umph, umph,” she said, under her breath, and closing her eyes, lay back in the carriage reflectingly; but Annie was not disposed, for reasons of her own, to permit such a dangerous line of thought as she perceived her aunt

was commencing, so checking her tears, she astonished Miss Gray by beginning to converse in lively tones about the ball.

“Aunt Jane, did you observe a very nice-looking lady, dressed very fancifully? She wore a large black tissue veil, studded with stars. I named her the ‘Goddess of Night’—she did not dance.”

“Yes, Annie, I did remark her, walking about all the evening with the same gentleman—bold hussey, I thought her, though I can’t deny that she was very nice-looking indeed. I remarked she had lovely black hair.”

“That was Mr. Elliot, one of the Highland officers, who was with her,

and she is Lady Juliet Buchanan, a daughter of the Duke of St. Ives."

"Indeed, dear. I don't care who she is, my opinion is all the same—I think she is a bold minx. It will not be her fault if she does not get married to that young man."

Annie yawned, and said—

"I am so tired, Aunt, let me sleep till evening; and, thank goodness, here we are at home at last," as the carriage stopped in Broughton Place, flat No. 3.

"Sleep till evening, my child, and then until morning, if you like; you do look tired. Kiss me, pet, and get to bed as fast as you can. Put by none of your finery until morning."

And Miss Gray dismissed poor

Annie to her restless couch, looking as unlike Mr. Elliot's idea of a vampire as he could desire.

Miss Gray, having sent away Annie, began to ruminate over her tears, as she undressed. Laying aside the cap and wig, she replaced them by a large night-cap with immense borders. Miss Gray might innocently indulge her taste in wearing immense borders, as she had no one's comforts to consider in this matter but her own.

This fabric she confined with a binder, and once it was pinned on and her feet made comfortable in easy slippers, she was in a state to reflect: and she did reflect; and deeply, over that one large pearly drop, so large

that it broke and scattered little seedlings around it, on Annie's pretty sash.

Could it be possible that her niece should love Lady Merton's nephew and the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton's first cousin? At this hideous thought the wide borders stood on end.

"Thank Heaven!" she ejaculated aloud, "thank Heaven, that the young man will be in a few hours out of this altogether. Even should my idea be correct, there can be but little mischief done."

Miss Gray tried to compose herself with this thought, and lay down on her virgin couch, but not to sleep—at least the sleep that did come to

her was born of nightmare; and more than once she started up in a state of white heat from visions of Lady Merton, like an avenging fury, standing by her side.

“Indeed, your ladyship, I am not to blame, I never knew of it,” she cowardly said, and awoke—awoke to find that this was a dream, and that the idea which had given birth to it was merely an idea, and possibly a false one.

When Miss Gray saw Annie each day occupied in her usual manner, visiting her school, taking her walk, knitting no end of stockings—Annie was a famous knitter—and going regularly with her to church, she began to gain courage, and dismissed as ab-

surd the idea which had so distressed her.

The only change she perceived, was that Miss Jennings spent more time in her own room, and wrote more letters. The post also came oftener to the house, but he could not bring letters to flat No. 3, or surely Miss Gray would have seen them.

Miss Gray forgot that Janet was very fond of Annie, and she did not know that the days the Southampton and Marseilles mails came in, that Janet found the scale staircase a very pleasant place, where she had no end of gossip with the friendly postman.

Summer had now set in with uncommon heat, the Honourable and

Reverend Daniel, with Lady Merton, had fled from the burning pavements long ago, and sought coolness in the Isle of Bute.

Miss Gray felt lonely in her accustomed place in church without her beloved pastor. Both she and Annie felt languid.

“I think, my child,” she said, “we will go for a few weeks to Blair More; it will do you and me both a world of good. You look pale, dear, and as for me, I feel as dry as a sucked lemon—umph, umph! Should you like it, Annie?”

“Yes, dear Aunt Jane; I am quite as tired as you are of these dusty streets and closed-up houses. When will you start?”

“Next week, Annie, we will shut up like the grandees, and leave a notice outside where our letters are to be sent.”

At this common and uninteresting remark, Annie coloured up to the eyes and turned away.

In another week, as Miss Gray had said, flat No. 3 was closed, and the postman was left directions where to deliver the letters for the next three months, and Annie with Miss Gray went off to Blair More to seek for fresh air and roses.

CHAPTER VI.

IN WHICH LADY JULIA SHOWS MR. ELLIOT,
SEN., THE PICTURES SHE HAD IN VIEW.

LADY JULIA BUCHANAN was a duke's daughter, but the duke, though a duke, was poor. Blessed he was, certainly, in the Psalmist's sense of the word, for his quiver was full. Not fewer than seven ladies, by courtesy, had he to dôte and get husbands for; so when Lady Julia, the fifth in descent, flirted abominably with Mr. Buchanan of ancient Scottish

family, and with five thousand a year, the old Duke welcomed the alliance, albeit the gentleman numbered fifty summers and Lady Julia but sixteen.

She married him, triumphant at leaving four older sisters still spinsters; and with this feeling, the predominant one, is it a marvel that book-loving Mr. Buchanan was not happy in his noble choice? He took her to Rome, and while he lived in its ancient glories, she lived in its present pleasures — dressed, danced, flirted, emptied his pockets, and returned to Scotland, to her husband's home, a very knowing lady as ever numbered twenty years.

Their little Billy was born in the

purple city, living for two years under shadow of the Papal hand, the fairest little blossom that ever gladdened parents' eyes. But his mother did not love him as we see some mothers love their offspring, and he was yet too young to be a comfort to his father.

Daily he was carried in by nurse to receive the parental kiss, which he received with lively crowings and stretching out of little legs and arms. This atom in creation, however, was not sufficient with its love to keep the disappointed, weakly father alive, and he sunk rapidly through the want of tender nursing and by means of a Scottish climate, and was carried to his family vault in

three years after their return from Italy.

We know already how Lady Julia mourned for him, and for this her past and present conduct her sister-in-law, Mrs. Elliot, hated her. No milder term suited the energetic warm-hearted woman.

“For my sake, Dorothea, and for the sake of your little nephew, treat her civilly. I invited her here, and she, under my roof, at least must be respected.”

“Yes, sir, (Mrs. Elliot always called her husband, sir, or Mr. Elliot). You need not fear; if she says black is white I will not contradict her, or if she marries your son I will provide the cake for the wedding,” and Mrs.

Elliot marched off, leaving her husband twisting his thumbs, and looking rather foolish.

Every evening Lady Julia entertained the invalid—who reclined on a couch, and Mr. Elliot, who reposed in his chair—with her guitar. The red ribbon round her fair throat formed a pretty contrast with her black dress, and her little feet, supported on a high stool, displayed their exquisite shape to George Elliot, who viewed them with half-closed eyes.

She had a beautiful contralto voice, and she sang ballads to perfection—ballads of all countries, giving to each their characteristic expression. The listener could scarcely award the palm to one above the other; Spanish,

Neapolitan, Irish, Scotch, followed each other in rapid succession, and met with bursts of admiration from both her hearers. The most plaintive were listened to by Mr. Elliot, sen., with tears coursing each other down his cheeks, (he was a lover of music), while George's eyes were fastened on the inspired singer. During this entertainment Mrs. Elliot was always obliged to leave the room. She devoted that time to little Billy in the nursery, who as a regular matter looked for her appearing. Dear Granny, as he called her—Dear Granny would then tell him tales just as they came uppermost in her mind, and little Billy always cried for “more, more.” He was very fond

of fishing and Mr. Elliot had given him little baby tackle, so his favourite stories were always those connected with fish.

“Tell me, granny, more about the flies and the minnows,” he said, and pillowed on her kind bosom with his soft round cheek pressed to her shoulder, she invented to his little heart’s content; and underneath sat Lady Julia, fishing another sort of sport to that which her little Billy loved, and showed herself a clever sportswoman. She successfully played with, caught, and landed young George Elliot.

“I told you so,” fairly enough, retorted Mrs. Elliot to her husband, “and now I will make their cake.”

Mr. Elliot, senior, was vexed; he would rather his son had not married so early in life, and he would rather he had chosen another wife; but he had not as bad an opinion of Lady Julia as his impetuous wife had. He considered that the soil to which she had been transplanted on her marriage had not been congenial to her nature; and although in any case she could not be considered as a valuable plant—still under proper treatment he believed she would, for her species, turn out very well.

At all events, he would not coerce his son; it was against his principles to do so, unless it were a question of morals, so he not only gave his consent to the match, but doubled

his son's already handsome allowance. He made only one condition—that he should not give up his profession.

“Certainly not, my dear father, it is the last thing I would wish. Julia will go with me, she says, to Timbuctoo, Hong Kong, or any other place on the habitable globe,” said George, almost enthusiastically, for although he had not quite chosen to marry just at present, he was touched by her expressed devotion.

“We will take care of Billy for her ladyship; won't we, Dorothea?” asked Mr. Elliot of his wife, who was present.

“Yes, of course, Mr. Elliot, we would scarcely send him out to India to die of fever before a week was out.

Were her ladyship likely to be anxious about the precious little fellow, I would tell her there was no need;" and she muttered, "I will take as good care of him as she does of herself; that is saying enough."

George heard her, and coloured.

"Mother, I must say you are hard on Lady Julia."

"Perhaps so, George. If so, God forgive me; I pray she may be to you a better wife than she was to my poor brother," and putting her handkerchief to her eyes, the warm-hearted woman left the room.

"Father," asked George, anxiously, "do you take the same view of Lady Julia's character as mother does?"

“No, George, certainly not; I am quite sure she has a great deal of good in her, and I have no doubt she will make you a very affectionate, and probably *jealous* wife;” and Mr. Elliot smiled.

George looked gloomy, and had recourse to a cigar. He muttered something in going out very like—

“It can’t be helped now,” or words bearing that philosophical meaning. True, it was now too late to discuss this matter, and George manfully faced his lot, making the very best of it. He must go up to Edinburgh to arrange about settlements and other matters connected with his nuptials. On account of the necessity of his joining

his regiment in India, Lady Julia overlooked the propriety of waiting until the twelve months allotted to widowhood had expired.

“So that dear Mrs. Elliot does not consider me a savage,” she said sweetly. “It is ten months exactly since *your poor brother’s* death,” she continued, (referring to her almanack,) (Lady Julia had a habit of considering her husband as other people’s relations more than her own, and her child in the same way.)

“*Your little nephew*, my Billy, is just six years and ten months old.”

Mrs. Elliot could with difficulty refrain from slapping her, and if she only could have slapped her, she,

Mrs. Elliot, would have felt much relieved; but she had made her promise to her husband to behave politely to her, and she was a woman of her word. She shifted uneasily on her seat, and at the first break in her talk got up and left her.

Lady Julia was vain and obtuse; she had no idea of Mrs. Elliot's feelings towards her. She thought her often brusque in manner, and very ill-tempered — “wonderfully like, in some respects, to poor Buchanan,” she used to say, but she excused her, “her opportunities had been so few for mixing among the ‘Vere de Veres,’ and she was getting into years, poor old soul.” To her dismay,

she found that she was to be left to her company for the few days the gentlemen would spend in Edinburgh, so she arranged, in her own mind, to be a little unwell and to keep to her private apartment, when, with her favourite companion—her French maid—she would make out a list of dress for her trousseau, and for India. Plenty of occupation, and food convenient for her mind she would thus secure, and exemption from her dear sister-in-law and future mother-in-law's company. Mrs. Elliot, for her part, was delighted at this arrangement; she was thus spared the difficult task she had anticipated, and for strength to meet which she was prepared to make a subject of prayer.

Little Billy and she fished, and picked buttercups and daisies, making endless chains of 'em for "mamma," the only part of the play in which granny did not find delight, but she would not be guilty of checking the little son in his devotion to his mother, she merely lifted up hands and eyes at his angelic innocence.

CHAPTER VI.

A STARTLING REVELATION.

MEANWHILE George Elliot flew through Edinburgh, paying farewell bachelor visits to a few fair friends and visiting his club *en garçon* once more,—he was a light-hearted fellow, however, and having made up his mind to be hanged, as some of his friends ungallantly named the approaching ceremony, he resolved to die like a brave man, and sped along the streets gaily, asking for congratu-

lations of the acquaintances he chanced to meet.

Among others he thus stumbled on was our friend the Honourable and Rev. Daniel Merton, who, with his mother, had returned the previous week to their mansion in Charlotte Square. Daniel suffered from some defect of vision that obliged him to wear spectacles, yet not so much to assist his sight as to hide the painful-looking deformity of both eyes turning inward. Daniel was but a *man*, although esteemed a *prophet* among his friends, and in saying so we merely state, as a necessary corollary, that he was vain; and this defect in his eyes was as a thorn in his flesh. His rigidity of muscle, and the spectacles, combined to add years to his appearance; yet he was

a young man, and of this few strangers were aware.

“Mr. Merton, I beg pardon,” said a voice in his ear, and behind his back, and if we call to mind the peculiar mode in which he carried his head, this quarter to address him was the very best.

Mr. Merton turned, on being so greeted, and met the beaming face of George Elliot.

“Mr. Elliot, ah! how is the leg? All right, I presume.”

“Quite right, thanks. I ran after you to say that I start for India in three weeks, so that if Lady Merton or you have any message for Cousin Charley, if you send it to my club before then, I shall have great pleasure in conveying it to him.”

“Thanks; you are very good. I have nothing to send that a letter cannot carry. I will tell my mother of your kind offer, perhaps she may be glad to take advantage of it. When do you leave Scotland, do you say?”

“In three weeks. I have much to do in the meantime, and have to ask for your congratulations. I am not going solitary back to India like poor Cousin Charley; Lady Julia Buchanan does me the honour of accompanying me as Lady Julia Elliot.”

“Indeed, Mr. Elliot, I do congratulate you,” answered the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, taking his arm. “How did this happen; did it all result from a fracture?” he inquired jocosely.

“No, not altogether: I believe it finished it.” (Here Mr. Merton took off his hat to two ladies who passed.) “I beg your pardon,” said Mr. Elliot, interrupting himself, “but will you tell me who that young lady is? Is she” (looking after her involuntarily) “Miss Jennings?”

“Yes, she is Miss Jennings,” rather stiffly replied Mr. Merton.

“Ah, I am glad to have seen her, on Charley’s account. I am bringing him out a fine oil likeness of her. It was not ready when he left; lucky for him I got that fracture.”

“You do not mean to say my cousin is so very silly as to pay what an oil picture must cost for the sake of a

pretty face?" asked Mr. Merton tremulously.

"For the sake of a pretty face!" repeated Elliot with surprise. "Not surely alone for the sake of a pretty face, but for the sake of the girl to whom he is engaged."

The Honourable and Reverend Mr. Merton visibly started, but with measured tones replied—

"Engaged, Mr. Elliot; no, surely not engaged. He may be fool enough to love her (fie, fie, young prophet), but as to being engaged—impossible!" almost snorted out Mr. Merton.

"It is both possible and a fact, Mr. Merton," obstinately repeated Mr. Elliot. "I have it from Charley's lips and under his hand repeatedly. Ah! this

is the shop where the picture lies, will you come in and look at it?"

"No, sir," sternly replied Mr. Merton. "I have no interest in this business (fie, fie, young prophet), and if it be true what you state so decidedly, I must take instant measures to break off so absurd and improper a connexion."

"O, Mr. Merton, I fear I have done Charley some mischief, perhaps I should not have mentioned this affair—pray have pity on the poor fellow—I never saw a fellow so in love, so happy, and so miserable all at once; and the girl is so pretty, and seems a nice girl. Why, why be so angry?"

"You mistake me, Mr. Elliot, I am not angry, as you express it. I am

shocked—grieved, to find that my cousin has shown such disregard to his ancient line—so little respect to his father's—his mother's memory—to say nothing of what he owes to Lady Merton, and to me, his guardian."

"Indeed, Mr. Merton, I do not understand you; surely the girl is respectable."

The Honourable and Reverend Daniel laughed scornfully as he repeated the obnoxious word *respectable*.

"Yes, I hope so, for her own sake, yet scarcely fit, on that account, to become a member of the houses of Merton or Maitland. Adieu, Mr. Elliot, your sentiments are a strange contrast to your acts; pray pre-

sent my compliments to Lady Julia," and raising his hat he turned off, while Mr. Elliot plaintively called after him.

"Pray, Mr. Merton, be merciful to Charley; remember you were once young."

"*Remember you were once young,*" painfully rang in the ears of the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton, and yet he was but six-and-thirty.

CHAPTER VII.

MISS GRAY RECEIVES A VISIT FROM HER
PASTOR.

Six-and-thirty years to be told to remember—to call to mind, as if from ages past, the feelings of youth. It was hard to bear, although said by a man ten years his junior, and who spoke it in ignorance of facts. Mr. Elliot would undoubtedly have said that the Honourable and Reverend D. Merton had been at least twenty years longer on earth than he, and as to his being

capable of love, he would have as soon believed it credible his father's old gamekeeper being in love as Charley Maitland's guardian cousin : and more than this—in love with the girl of whom he had spoken so slightly, and for whose sake he was so wrath with Cousin Charley.

Mr. Merton's conscience was so thickly covered with cobwebs, that to do him justice, he did not perceive what conscience would have shown him, so in wrath, which he believed to be righteous, that prophet strode along the streets of Edinburgh ; not walking in the manner which moody men usually do, with head bent, and shoulders drawn forward ; and if little

—with legs stretched to their utmost limit striding on—but with head erect, poised grander than ever on the stately shoulders, he looked over his fellow-men, disdain apparent in every step.

From west to east Mr. Merton walked, and stopped opposite to Miss Gray's dwelling in Broughton Place, flat No. 3

Without giving himself time to cool, as was his usual custom, he knocked and rang, and instantly ingress was afforded up the scale staircase; and with measured step—although so excited—he ascended and inquired if Miss Gray had returned.

“Yes, sir,” replied Janet, “but

only yesterday, and she has seen no visitor as yet."

This Janet added, hoping the gentleman would have taken the hint and not desire to enter; she knew how his visit would flurry her mistress; the drawing-room was still in its summer clothing, *i.e.*, yellow muslin, in which ornaments, glasses, and chandeliers were enveloped—and windows and floor were quite bare. Had Janet been aware of the state of Mr. Merton's mind, she would not have heeded where she showed him, and she could have eased the mind of poor Miss Gray, who received the announcement of his visit with the mixed feelings of pleasure at his calling so soon after her return, and the instant recollection

of the appearance the drawing-room presented.

“Annie, dear, what a room for Mr. Merton to see, without even a fire to make it a little pleasant looking.”

“What matter, aunt, gentlemen never mind such things; probably he will not see that it presents any uncommon appearance unless indeed he should feel cold; go in at once, Aunt Jane; at all events put no temptation in his way to perceive its deficiencies.”

“Is my cap right, Annie?” Miss Gray inquired hurriedly, giving herself an uncomfortable look in the glass.

“Yes, yes, Aunt Jane, you know

you always look charming in his eyes," and Miss Jennings playfully pushed her out of the door. In a second she was in presence of her beloved pastor.

"This *is* kind," said Miss Gray, cheerily taking both his hands; one was yielded to her grasp, and gave a limp shake, the other was extricated at once, and decidedly — no wonder, for the handle of the umbrella was included in her grasp.

"How are you, Mr. Merton, and how is her ladyship?" Miss Gray inquired, a little damped by his manner; not that the limp shake denoted any extraordinary state of feelings. Here we hope our readers will excuse us for making a slight digression, while we

comment on three different modes of performing our national mode of greeting, as practised by the clerical body; and varied according to the development of three different sections—which we classify 1, 2, 3.

No. 1—Those whose consciences are bound by their ordination vows—here hand-shaking is firm (soft or hard, depending on physical conformation).

No. 2—We name the borderers, who sway from side to side, avoiding breakers a-head, and advance with a sure course; here, hand-shaking is limp, very limp, and only upheld by the enthusiastic or hardy pressure of the recipient.

No. 3—Those bound by no rules,

voque la galère whither the wind blows—and to them is peculiar the shake, warm, affectionate, which in some instances amounts to a squeeze, including the wrist as well as hand of the victim.

This analysis is the result of severe study, and as exceptions to rules only prove the truth of them, we shall not be the least discomfited by many dissentient voices to it.

Mr. Merton's reply to Miss Gray's inquiry for Lady Merton's health was laconically made. "She was better, the air of Bute agreed with her; but would not Miss Gray sit down?" for Miss Gray still stood, and Mr. Merton placed a seat for her, into which she sank mechanically; holding closely be-

tween her folded palms a pocket-handkerchief, snatched from her wardrobe in haste, and dashed with drops of some *eau* by Annie. Miss Gray felt there was something very much astray; but what was it, what could it be? and had she been his butler John, she would surely have imagined that Mr. Merton had detected a smudge on the neck of a claret jug.

Mr. Merton deliberately laid down his hat and umbrella on Miss Gray's dusty centre table, oblivious of dust, that in his normal state his soul abhorred, and then with body free he commenced to unload his mind.

“Miss Gray, I feel deeply pained and mortified by an intelligence which I received a short time ago; and well

authenticated as it appears to be, I can scarcely yet quite credit it."

"Sir, sir!" (Miss Gray all aghast).

"Yes, Miss Gray; and I may truly say that not the least grievous part of it, is the necessity it enforces on me to withdraw the feelings of friendliness and esteem which I have entertained towards you, now for many years."

"Mr. Merton—sir, there must be some great mistake in this, I know of nothing; I am utterly ignorant of, by act, word, or thought, anything that could cause you annoyance."

Mr. Merton eyed her keenly; truth, firm, unshaken truth was written in that poor flushed face—flushed into unsightly spots of red and white by

nervous tremors, and instinctively he believed her. Stretching out one hand, he, for the nonce, shook her's heartily, warmly; it was a shake expressive of—"Forgive me, I suspected you wrongly, and we are friends again."

Miss Gray drew a long breath, the spotted colour spread over cheeks and brow, circulation commenced—she felt herself once more.

"Dear Mr. Merton, what does all this mean?"

"Dear old friend, I fear I must grieve you; I never should have doubted you, yet the double guilt thus laid on one naturally dear to you is even painfully felt by me."

Miss Gray's heart throbbed, and the

handkerchief, which in laundresses' phrase had received no end of clapping, was folded afresh to be mangled by her two palms ; but she did not speak.

“Miss Gray, that young woman Miss Jennings has held a clandestine acquaintance with my cousin, Mr. Maitland, and has entrapped him into an engagement.”

Miss Gray shot up as if she had received an electric shock, and gasped out—

“Oh, Mr. Merton, she is not engaged; she cannot be engaged, the child would have told me; she never would have acted so—to have flirted as they say, I do not doubt, although, except one night, I never even suspected that they admired one another. Mr.

Merton, who informed you? It cannot be—it cannot be. I will go and ask the poor child to come in and clear herself.”

Miss Gray was bundling out of the room, but Mr. Merton checked her.

“Stay, Miss Gray, such a proceeding would never answer. I fear, I greatly fear my informant knew too well the truth of what he communicated. Pray return, and tell me what you know of this very, very unhappy—and pardon me—discreditable affair. You seem to me to admit just now a partial knowledge of Miss Jennings’ conduct.”

“I—I now remember, that night before Mr. Maitland left Edinburgh with his regiment, at the ball the officers gave, that Annie and he were

very much together—indeed, sir, I do not know how much, for Annie is a great dancer, and at a ball she never wants partners, so I seldom see her from the time we enter until we leave. She is always in the dancing-room where the crowd is so great, that whenever I get a look at her I can scarcely distinguish who is her partner ; but that night I do remember now,” Miss Gray groaned, “I saw her pretty frequently, and—and ”——

“Proceed, Miss Gray.”

“It was always Mr. Maitland who was with her. On returning home I began to question her, but the poor thing was so tired I did not like to press her just then ; and as Mr. Maitland left Scotland that day, and Annie went

about just as usual, I really forgot all about it. Oh, Mr. Merton, dear— young things will be young things, and I trust in God that there is no cause for your displeasure. Annie is a good child, and would not deceive me.”

The Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton smiled ironically.

“I fear, my good friend, you will find yourself disappointed; Miss Jennings is a very accomplished young person, and not so very young too as to be excused for treating her protectress, her more than aunt, with deep dissimulation—and for making a secret engagement to marry a young man quite out of her own sphere; causing him to be guilty of disrespect to his noble

relations ; and in case so rash a promise as it appears he has made should be fulfilled, to bring disgrace on a line of ancestors unstained heretofore by one drop of plebeian blood.”

Could Miss Gray have got redder in the face she must have done so now ; she rubbed her nose, and became less nervous ; for her respectable relations were outraged ; she felt Mr. Merton was encroaching on his privileges.

“Will you kindly give Miss Jennings a message from me, Miss Gray ?” he said, taking possession of his dusty hat, and umbrella ; “tell her—this marriage shall never take place if the influence of Lady Merton and myself can prevent it. Tell her it will ruin Mr. Maitland’s prospects in life. He will

not be of legal age for four years, and during those four years all he has to exist on, apart from his wretched pay is £200 a year. I have hitherto never restricted him to that pittance, for it is in my power, as his guardian with unlimited authority, to aid him as I see right; but under these circumstances he shall never receive ^{*}a guinea more than he can claim, either to advance him in his profession or to pay his gaming debts. He shall be kept under, until he learns sense not to sink himself and his family by marrying this girl. She should have more sense too, Miss Gray, considering her years. My cousin is but one and twenty—a poor fellow who has scarcely forgotten the taste of his baby-ring—while she is six years his

senior. Folly, folly, on the face of it, Miss Gray ; and, alas ! more than that on her part—duplicity, painful to witness in a young woman ; had she confided in you, had she boldly announced her presumption to his family, I could easier have forgiven her ; for ambition is something noble, although in this case not commendable. Tell her now if she persists in marrying my cousin, Lady Merton will never receive her ; and indeed I feel sure I may answer for the other members of his family. As a smuggled relation she must be content to live, separating him from friends and country ; and if they have descendants, the Jennings' line of Maitland will be a distinct race."

Mr. Merton having delivered this

brilliant peroration, turned towards the door, and quickly, too—for he was talking himself into fury, and felt he was losing command. Miss Gray's tears fell thick and fast—the neatly-folded handkerchief was damped by application to the eyes. He looked, and seeing her excessive grief he was melted, and returning, said—

“Forgive me, dear Miss Gray; I am truly sorry to wound you, but Miss Jennings must be brought to a sense of her conduct. Will you do your best endeavours to make the wilful young woman see this affair in its true light, and let me know the result?”

“Yes, sir,” mournfully promised Miss Gray. She was disappointed in more than in Annie—she was hurt, deeply

hurt, by her honourable and reverend pastor

“Do not be afraid, sir, of me; I shall exert myself to the fullest to prevent Annie entering a family that, it appears, she would so much disgrace. A retired shopkeeper, sir,” Miss Gray said firmly, “*I* thought would have suited her very nicely at one time, but that is past.”

Mr. Merton coloured at this shot of Miss Gray’s; it was well aimed, and went home. He stammered—wonderfully so, for the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, and muttering—

“Thanks, thanks, Miss Gray;” he bowed himself out of doors, running quickly down the scale staircase into the noisy streets, where all unconscious of

the injuries done to the noble house of Maitland, life and business pursued its path.

CHAPTER VIII

ANNIE WITH THE MADONNA FACE IS PUT IN A
PASSION.

WHEN the hall door shut out Mr. Merton's retreating figure, Miss Gray sobbed afresh, now she could indulge in all the luxury of grief; her heart was heavy, and crying relieved it, so she wept till the relief was effected. Blowing her nose loudly, she began a train of reflection. Truly the news she had just been told—that her niece, Annie Jennings, should be engaged to be

married to a nephew of Lady Merton's and he first cousin, too, of the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, her shepherd, her pastor—was marvellous; and being a woman of a shrewd mind she quickly came to the conclusion that it was a very silly affair, unsuitable in many respects. That fact was soon dismissed from her mind as needing no further consideration; but two things remained to oppress her—viz., her shepherd's harsh remarks—and her niece's dissimulation.

Alas! how many falsehoods had reached and entered her unsuspecting ear in answer to inquiries made of—

“Annie, what kept you out so long to-day?”

“Walking, walking, auntie; the day

is so fine, and the air of the town depresses me!"

"But alone, my child; I don't like these solitary walks, so far from home, and up on that lonely Arthur's Seat."

"Oh, auntie, I never feel lonely; my thoughts are such good companions." These, Miss Gray remembered perfectly, were the answers she used to receive when Annie spent long mysterious hours out during that ten days' acquaintance with young Maitland. Truly Annie was an adept in deceit, and Miss Gray groaned at the thought. And again:—now she understood why the postman came so often to the house, although she seldom saw any results from his visits. "Yet perhaps," she considered, "the

child meant well, she did not like to involve me in the matter; she guessed that Mr. Merton would come some day, just as he has done, when the affair had oozed out, and accuse me of treachery, and she thought to save me, poor child. Ah, that must be it," she said, with the fore-finger of her left hand in her mouth, while she mopped her face with the handkerchief repeatedly, as the trickling tears still coursed each other down her flushed face.

As she thus found excuses for Annie, her spirits rose. "Mr. Merton, you must not keep good principles and kind-heartedness, as well as pure blood, all to yourself and your proud line. The Grays, at all events, were

an upright people," said Miss Gray aloud, and getting off her chair, she peeped at herself in the yellow mus-lined mirror.

"A pretty reflection," she laughingly said; "very like to my own preserving pan down stairs with the Mogul plums in it, black, red, and yellow; if I could only leave out a bit of the red I should be in the de'il's own livery. Heigh ho! I wish dear Mr. Merton had been a wee bit less bitter; now I will go seek for the child." And off she trotted to Annie's room; when knocking, and receiving no reply she entered. Annie was not there. "Walking, of course; let me see when does the Indian mail come in—Janet knows to a cer-

tainty; I will call her." Janet came in, answering her mistress's bell.

Miss Gray.—"Janet, when do the Indian mails come in here?" Janet taken by surprise, and having no reply ready, on the spur of the moment tells a lie—

"I don't know, ma'am."

Miss Gray.—"Oh, very well; I can easily find out by the newspapers or my almanack." She was not deceived by Janet, but there was no use in telling her so; and on looking, as she proposed doing, she found her suspicions were correct—the mails had arrived in London the day before.

Miss Gray was a fair accountant; she could put two and two together

and know that they make four, and so in this instance she understood why her niece took long walks twice in the week, and spent several hours in her own room directly after this length of exercise ; reading and writing interesting letters take time.

Miss Gray's calculation was correct ; two and two do make four. Annie had received her Indian letters this morning, and on Mr. Merton's arrival did hurry off to the Calton Hill to enjoy the contents in peace. In harmony with this desire was all nature on this still autumnal day. It was soft and mild—a shadowy day—bringing to chastened minds a flood of memories, and, to the thoughtful, reaching to the hidden soul ; one of

those early winter days when earth seems to speak to Heaven—and when Heaven hears.

Annie's disposition was secretive; it was positively a trouble to her to tell a secret, not the pleasure it is to most girls, and many women; but in keeping her love and engagement to Charley Maitland from the knowledge of her aunt, she had acted, as Miss Gray divined, from prudential motives. She thought on her aunt's account, it would be better for her to be kept in ignorance of it; she knew how it would horrify her ideas of the fitting; and she was not at all sure that she would not have divulged it to the Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton himself, even, although she

had bound her by a solemn promise to silence. She might have thought that she owed him a higher duty, and, in any case, let it escape to that insinuating gentleman. Annie knew well how very displeasing such an engagement would be in his eyes, even apart from the Maitland and Merton pride, for a man as much *épris* as was the Honourable and Reverend Daniel, resembled, uncommonly, the dog in the manger, who will not take the prize, and yet none else shall.

So, considering every point of view, Annie determined to let matters take their course, and to keep her own counsel. The only person on whom she bestowed a partial confidence was Janet, who received her letters on the scale

staircase, not permitting the postman to enter flat No. 3 ; and Annie, in general, taking the precaution of reading them out of doors, it came to pass that Miss Gray never yet had seen even an envelope of Charley Maitland's.

Now Annie, seated in a sheltered spot, and quite alone, tidily opened her letter, not tearing it open in the manner an eager soul might, but opening just as much as was needful to extract the inside, leaving the thin cover quite uninjured.

In round bold characters wrote her young lover, type of his honest, manly nature ; and passionate were his words. Full of love and trust, he wrote, because so true himself, and never knowing of the scant measure he received in

return—a measure carefully poured out, although but a drop into the ocean of his large heart. *Qu'importe*, it is the law of nature that love should never be equal; and as lovers never find this out, we say again, *qu'importe*; besides, Annie was as God made her, she was not to be blamed because her heart was small; a drop from it left her drier than warm-hearted Charley, who poured out his love so lavishly, and yet did not exhaust his spring.

She now read half through his letter, in which he told her many things; sometimes an anecdote of his very young days, when his godmother, the Duchess of Purefoy, had given him a milk-white pony, the first real horse he had ever ridden; sometimes stories of his Eton

days, when his friends were among the noblest in noble Old England; and Annie sighed, remembering, with a pang, how little there was in common between them. How could she write about her early youth, when all she had to tell of it was learning lessons at her mother's knee in their little cottage-home—and of going to the kirk on Sundays—or being taken to a meeting on a week-day as a great reward for being very good, or the greatest pleasure of all—watching for Andrew Jennings to come from school and take her out to seek for bramble-berries. Again she sighed. This time her sigh was echoed, and, starting, she looked up and saw before her, in almost the very same spot as he had stood ten long years ago,

Andrew Jennings, a little stouter—a little graver—and ten years older.

“It seems, Miss Jennings,” he said, gravely, “we are fated to meet here.”

Annie folded up her letter, placed it carefully in her pocket, then rose, and, holding out her hand, said—

“Doctor Jennings, will you pardon me? I was very rude to you when we last met, now so long ago; and I have never seen you to ask forgiveness until now.”

“I will not pretend to misunderstand you, although it is strange I should remember,—yet I do,—to what you allude. I have truly lived a life since last we met; I have acquired fame, I have been married, and I am

now a widower; and yet, through all, comes vividly before me your little speech."

"I heard of your loss," said Annie, in a low tone, (involuntarily his soft voice modulated hers.)

"I heard of your loss, and I felt grieved for you."

"Thanks, you are very good."

"She was young and beautiful, Miss Jennings, and she owed so small a debt, it was cruel in our universal Creditor to make her pay it so soon. He was harder to her than to your mother, Annie, for her account was long. Yet I must not grieve, for what is life but a continual dying?"

"It is natural, I suppose, that you

should talk in such a manner, you see so much of death?"

"Yes, much truly. The Angel of Death reaps round me every day; I walk in the circle of his scythe, so far unscathed; and, following him closely, treading on his heels, comes the Angel of Life laden, and fills up the gaps left by cruel, unsparing death." Annie listened with interest; his voice was so melodious it enforced silence, and his mode of expression was not such as she was accustomed to. Together they walked slowly round the hill, the great Doctor deep in thought, and Annie gazing at him. Suddenly he shook off what seemed to be a gloomy line of reflection, and, turning to her, said, merrily—

“Annie, was this a good year for
bramble - berries ?” Annie laughed
and then said sadly—

“I do not know, I never know
now.”

“But I know,—in last September
I took my little girl (I have a child,
Miss Jennings) to the Highlands;
we two together to Loch Achray,
where we saw a farmhouse, and
my little girl and I fell in love
with the farmer’s wife; she took us
in and fed us on sweetest milk and
butter, and we gathered brambleberries,
—for one week we remained there,
that is all the time Andrew Jennings
can now spare to childhood’s pleasures.
Miss Jennings, will you come and see
my little Penelope? She is like a snow

drop in a poppy-flower; in other words, her hair is red, and her skin white."

"How old is she?" inquired Annie, confused, she knew not why, but somehow this grave and graceful doctor was very unlike her Cousin Andrew.

"How old?" he repeated, "how old do you inquire is my Grecian, too young truly to think of an Ulysses, although she is precocious,—she is six years and some months; but we must part, I see my carriage at the foot of the hill. I left it to gain a breath of fresh air after a fatiguing morning, and I am rewarded by getting a refreshing beyond my expectations, Miss Jennings;" bending down to

apply his compliment more directly their eyes met, and Miss Jennings coloured.

“Will you visit my little Penelope?” he inquired, in lower tones.

“Yes,” replied Annie, subdued in spite of herself.

“Send in your name, I suppose you know where to call, I will see you at once.”

They then shook hands and parted. The great doctor getting into his quiet handsome dark carriage, and Annie walking slowly home, musing truly, and yet forgetting all the time that she had never finished her lover’s letter.

Directly Miss Gray perceived her niece’s step on the stairs, she lis-

tened and heard her proceed at once to her own apartment, then delaying a few moments to give her as well as herself breathing time, she followed to her door and knocked. A slight delay ensued before she received a summons to enter, and then found Annie standing in the centre of the room looking rather confused. Miss Gray's perceptions had received an impulse, and at once she saw traces of tears hastily wiped off the cheeks of her fair niece.

“Crying, Annie? crying, child; what is the matter?”

“Crying, Aunt,” replied the niece, quickly, on her part perceiving the marks of Miss Gray's late emotions.

“Yes, Annie, and I regret to say

I have had reason to weep scalding tears over you."

"Over me, aunt?" in tones of astonishment, replied the guilty fair one, with distended eyes and deepening colour, and whose heart began to throb to the tune of, *Discovered*.

"Yes, Annie, do not try to deceive me longer, I know all."

"O aunt, aunt! who told you? It must have been Mr. Merton; but how did he hear it? Could Charley?" and here she broke down in confusion.

"Annie, my poor little girl, my dead sister's child, tell me truly, tell me who has loved and cherished you for full ten years, as if you were my very own, why, why have you thus

deceived me, and let a stranger see how despised I am?"

"No, aunt, dearest aunt, I did not, do not despise you, how could I? but partly because I feared your good counsel, and partly because I would not injure you in the eyes of those of whom you think so much, and who like you? That was the real cause of my secrecy, dear Aunt Jane, and nothing else, believe me. I knew, too, how you would have thought it your duty to tell that overbearing man, that proud Pharisee, all about it, and Charley—I mean Mr. Maitland—was particularly anxious to avoid this. He did not indeed ask me to conceal our story from you—I proposed it—for indeed, dear aunt, I could not

bear to hear all you would say against it. Forgive me, pray forgive, indeed, it is better as it is, even although it has given you a pang." And Annie knelt before her aunt, and sobbed.

Miss Gray was affected, she had never seen her show so much emotion, and folding her hands over her bent head, she solemnly forgave and blessed her.

Annie was in a curiously stirred state of feeling, she had never experienced such a strange sort of hurly burly and she rather liked it. Charley Maitland—Andrew Jennings—and her aunt—all receiving from her portions of love, different indeed in kind and in degree, but still all tearing her little

soul, unaccustomed to be so treated, to babyrags.

“Annie, my pet, listen to me, you have my hearty forgiveness, although (with good intentions, I admit) you have not acted fairly towards me; but now, as a little penance you must listen while I recount all that Mr. Merton told me to repeat.” And very nearly word for word, slightly softened, so as not to pierce Annie’s swelling breast, she repeated his message.

“Is that all, Aunt Jane; have you ended that wonderful man’s speech?”

“Yes, dear, that is the sum total of it, and now weigh it, child; for although cloaked in unpleasant language for you or me to hear, it is worth pondering over for both Mr.

Maitland's and your sake, I am not sure that you would not show more true love by resigning the young fellow than by keeping him."

Then Miss Gray rose and left her to swallow a pill nearly as distasteful as the memorable one she administered to Andrew Jennings some ten years before.

The instant she left the room Annie flew to the door, locked it, bolted it, and finally drew against it a heavy box; then she sat down at the furthest end of the room and broke out into a passion of tears. Love of some kind or other, and for some person or other, and wounded pride, nearly choked her; she let down her long hair, she tore it, she stamped up and down the room,

then nearly exhausted with this unusual emotion she knelt down at a box, and, still sobbing, opened it and took out a little coloured photograph, at which she gazed earnestly through her tears.

Poor young Charley ! very handsome you look in your pretty uniform, of which you appear so innocently proud, with your sweet laughing blue eyes and frank, manly glance, truly a very fellow to win a maiden's love. Heavier and heavier fell Annie's tears as she viewed the picture, which lost form and distinctness in her mist of tears, and faded from her sight, significant she felt it of the future, as a palpable distance arose between her and it; she could bear it no longer, but shutting up the case with a snap, she put it

back to its former abode and locked the box.

Then, rising, she bathed her eyes in rose-water, smoothed and tidied her hair, changed her dress, and taking her knitting with her, she moved back her large box, unlocked and unbolted the door, and joined her aunt in the drawing-room.

Miss Gray judiciously refrained from alluding to the topic which yet engrossed both their minds, and with rather dreary attempts at conversation the evening wore away. Next morning, after Annie had given her aunt breakfast in bed — (Miss Gray always partook of that meal in the privacy of her four-posted, curtained couch) — and replied rather tartly to her

honeyed-voiced query of "How did you sleep, love?" with "Quite well, aunt; you know I am an excellent sleeper," she left the room directly, and did not return for a couple of hours or more, and then prepared for a walk.

"Going out, darling—and at this hour, dressed so very nicely," exclaimed Miss Gray, perceiving that she had on her best clothes. Annie vouchsafed no explanation, although it was no wonder that Miss Gray had exclaimed. She had on a handsome silk of a neutral tint, a black velvet jacket, a black lace bonnet with *real French* roses of a beautiful pink colour, and a long lace veil drawn closely round her face and throat in modest folds, nicely

fitting new gloves completed her attire.

“Well, my love,” slowly said Miss Gray, inspecting her dress and thinking how lovely she was, “mind you take your umbrella, for the day looks cloudy, and it would be a pity to spot your best silk.”

“*N’importe*,” said Annie, heedlessly.

“Ech, dear, what’s that you said?”

But Annie did not repeat her remark. She walked to the door, and placing one hand on the lock, turned round and said—

“Aunt Jane, tell the Honourable and Reverend Mr. Merton from me, that I renounce all claim to Mr.—(here Annie nearly broke down)—Mr. Charles Maitland, I will never marry him—

never be the cause of bringing disgrace and infamy on his noble house ; and I trust this, my renunciation, will secure for him as high a seat in heaven as that favoured race now occupy on earth.”

Before Miss Gray could frame a reply to this speech, Annie had disappeared and flown for refuge to the Calton Hill, there to walk off her excitement and plan her course of action.

CHAPTER IX.

ANNIE TAKES A DECIDED PART.

ANNIE had not enjoyed the good sleep which she (rather untruthfully, we must confess) implied in reply to her aunt's inquiries. It was a restless, broken sleep, and when she did awaken, it was with sensations of unrefreshment.

Her little brain had worked ceaselessly, although so unconscious, during those hours of sleep, revolving ever

the same question of, “*Should I, shall I, give up poor dear Charley?*”

Annie was proud—pride, in fact, was the strongest passion of which she was capable, and the Honourable and Reverend Daniel had stung her to the quick. “She never could, no, she never would, enter that family to be so spurned; but in so doing, would it not, in fact, give *them* the victory? whereas to force *them* to receive her, to treat *her* with deference—nay, even to invite her to become a member of their proud family—would not *that* be the real victory?” Yes, truly; but how to manage this? Did she not know that they would, one and all of them, rather see Charley’s bonny young head laid low, and all un-

blemished rest in the family vault, than permit him to ally himself with Jennings and Gray blood, although in such alliance he should find his happiness.

The words of the Honourable and Reverend Daniel rung in her ears. "She will ruin his prospects, blast his life; *he* shall be outcast from his family; *she* will be her life long a smuggled relation." For four long years to wear his young life out in difficulties, perhaps in debts; or to be scorned in his regiment for not doing as others do, and (noble and true-hearted as was Charley) would he have courage to fight through this? Then after those four years had been so worried through, and that the splendid young

fellow, would fly home to claim his bride, what should he have to show his friends ?

A lady of thirty-one—well preserved certainly—yet unmistakably a lady of experience ; having ascended her hill, and received all the ripening from the meridian sun, and now was descending on the other side, slowly—slowly—still with the bloom going off her peach.

Annie's age was beginning to be felt by her as a very sore spot. She did not like to talk of it, or have it talked of was still worse ; and would not Charley's soldier friends all trot up to her and make their comments ? But why did she not think of all this before ? Alas ! there was the

mistake. Uncomfortable thoughts had clouded her horizon, but young Charley's love, so vehement, so warm, had dispersed them, leaving behind an unclouded brilliant sky; and the specks that now and again returned to it, his love brushed away.

Annie sighed and wept—then ceased to cry, to reflect anew; but still the same images arose, she could not chase them away.

Clearly her aunt thought her a goose, although she loved her dearly, and left her to solve her own problem in the evident belief that she would do so.

“Oh, dear!” moaned Annie “what shall I do? If I write and tell him of all this, he will throw up his commission

(if need be), to return on the moment. And then, oh, heavens; what a row there would be here! and what would it profit? Not an inch's way would he make, unless that under the vehemence of her emotions Lady Merton should sink. Even so, there would still remain the guardian, and implacable as he is now, under such circumstances even revenge would be righteous."

Annie tried a fresh thread in the web. "Shall I tell Mr. Merton to write to Charley, and if he is willing to resign me, to say I will submit? yet Mr. Merton would fairly reply—

"Thanks, Miss Jennings, for your graceful submission, but with headstrong young fellows, whose judg-

ment only comes with manhood's beard, we must take stronger measures. Your own good sense will tell you such a message would be useless. If you desire to act sincerely, you will give me a little note of acknowledgment that the engagement is foolish—and resign him.'

"Never, never, Mr. Merton!" she exclaimed aloud, in reply to this imaginary speech; yet in her heart she acknowledged the justice of the fancied argument, and tears burst out afresh. These tears brought relief; and of what were they the precursors? Of sober reason? Yes! and Annie's part was taken—reason won the day.

It was with a hard spirit Annie

rose and dressed this morning. She felt unhappy, though determined; and was disposed to be outrageous with poor Aunt Jane, if she ventured to applaud her conduct. As to Mr. Merton, no power should get her to appear before him to receive his hateful thanks.

The repose she looked forward to as a reward for her determination she had not as yet found, and thoughts of poor Charley filled her eyes to overflowing. But Annie Jennings would not swerve from a purpose so well considered, especially when pride and vanity pricked her on; and now she would take a crowning step in aid of her favourite passion, leaving no gap open for love to widen. No!—

when Charley would hear from his guardian, it should be out of her power to change; so Annie determinately took out her best clothes, smoothed her hair, contemplated herself in the glass, tried different effects, studied attitudes, thought over phrases, and finally went out for her walk, to the Calton Hill; but as she did not return for many hours, we may naturally suppose she did not restrict her walk to it.

Aunt Jane became very uneasy, indeed, as time went on: vague thoughts, and very uncomfortable ones, assailed her, though dismissed at once as silly; yet they would return, and each time with added strength.

“The child looked determined, umph ! umph ! Dressed in her very best clothes. God bless me ! I believe *they* always do that when—when—nonsense ! what a trick fancy is playing me. That lady who was taken out of the little loch in Arthur’s seat was dressed in a splendid satin, and her neck and arms were covered with jewels. God bless me ! how my hand trembles ; I never knew myself so silly before ; what can cause such tremors ? Annie is as shrewd a little maiden as ever trod heather, and her heart will never carry off her head. Why need I picture such horrible ideas ? The weather is very conducive to bile ; it is that, I think, and the liver is pressing on the heart ; at all events I do not feel quite well.”

Poor Miss Gray rang for Janet, and she gave her a spoonful of brandy : and after a little while it, and Janet's cheerful conversation, quite restored her. She wrote a note to her shepherd to acquaint him with Annie's resolution. It was as follows—

“ Dear Sir,

“ My niece has behaved just as I expected from her. She renounces all claim to Mr. Maitland's hand. No power shall induce her to enter a family where she would not be received as a welcome addition to it ; and you have her sanction to enclose this note to Mr. Maitland.

“ For her justification, permit me to state that I am perfectly satisfied with

the motives which induced her to keep me in ignorance of her engagement to your cousin. I hope, dear sir, this note will please you, and that in Mr. Maitland's next choice you will find all the necessities for your noble family that it needs, and in which my poor Annie is so deeply wanting.

“ With great respect,

“ Believe me, dear sir,

“ Your faithful old friend,

“ JANE GRAY.”

Miss Gray despatched her note to “ The Honourable and Reverend Daniel Merton,” and then sat thinking over long past days ; over her first acquaintance with him, how she had worshipped him, and now how he had disappointed

her. In musings like these her time was occupied, and her thoughts were beguiled from sweet Annie Jennings.

And now how was our young friend spending her time, arrayed in her pretty silk dress? Was she merely airing it on the Calton Hill, and running risks of getting it spotted by the mists rising up from Frith of Forth?

Was she indeed acting so unwomanly as this, so regardless of her wardrobe's most honoured occupant?

No, indeed! no such thing. She had a spirit of her own, this Jennings girl; she had a head, and a clever one. She did air herself once, twice perhaps, around that literary necro-

polis (may we so call it?) of some of Scotland's honoured names; but then to what place did she direct her steps?

Devinez, je vous la donne en un, en deux, en trois, vous l'abandonnez? Ah! well then, she retraced her steps towards the town; not walking in her usual quick, decided way, but continually changing time; sometimes walking at prestissimo speed, then largo again, until she had entered a certain street, famous owing to one house in it; and with a rising colour, and a beating heart, she stopped at this well-known dwelling, and, knocking, inquired—

“Is Dr. Jennings at home?”

“Yes, ma'am.”

“Is he disengaged !”

“Disengaged ! Oh, no, ma’am, he is never disengaged during hours for receiving patients.”

“When he dismisses his present patient will you kindly give him this card ?” and the maid promising to do so, showed her into a sort of antechamber to wait.

Annie might easily credit the maid’s assertion that the celebrated doctor was never disengaged, for the hall was half lined with ladies and gentlemen. As she passed by the door of the front room, she saw a long table spread with viands, round which several gentlemen stood eagerly talking and eating. These were doctors, she afterwards learned, who met in Dr. Jennings’

house as a sort of hospital, and were shown by him any interesting cases on hand, by which term *interesting*, doctors mean any unusual form of malady attacking poor humanity, and opening out for them an orthodox field for experiments.

Dr. Jennings was in truth a remarkable man—one of those rare intellects that appear at intervals, and advance, in one huge leap, some department of science suffering from a dead lock, which until then debars advancement. A man of large comprehensiveness, who embraced extensive views of human relations, and who did not hesitate, if need be, to sacrifice the lives of a few fellow-creatures in the grand effort to benefit millions.

We may advocate the principle, although we confess that the practice might be occasionally objectionable, if the objects were ever those in whom we were particularly interested; in such a case we think we should cry—

“Perish the principle, Dr. Jennings, and save the individual if possible.”

Some people think that such conduct as Dr. Jennings pursued argued hardness of heart; but in this they erred. He was a man of a particularly gentle, loveable nature, and endued with such mesmeric power that his melodious voice and light hand soothed sufferings which his art failed to reach. He was beloved by all classes; but especially was

he dear to the poor, by whose bedsides he would sit for hours regardless of the presence of squalor and want. Many a wretched night in depth of winter and in spring's cutting air would Dr. Jennings attend the summons of some poor woman, and with unfailing kindness. A titled lady might wait or send for someone else, but a poor person never — although the doctor was by no means insensible to the dignity of the peerage.

The long ante-room in which Annie waited had doors at either end; one communicated with the hall, the other with the stairs. The second floor to which it led, consisted of a large corridor. At one end of it were two waiting rooms, which were devoted to the

ordinary run of patients, not needing immediate assistance.

These were always crammed with people waiting—as in Bethesda's porches—their turn to step into the pool—in this case the doctor's little presence-chamber. Besides these rooms, there were a set of small chambers all round the gallery, into which were drafted one or two at a time from the general waiting-room, thus bringing them a few steps nearer to the waters troubled by the angel.

These wonders, however, as yet, Annie had not seen. She sat upright on a high-back oak chair, watching the continued ebb and flow of people from Andrew Jennings' presence, and thought with amazement over his ful-

filled prophecy. Time passed swiftly absorbed in contemplation, pleasantly carried on — not broken up — by the passers to-and-fro.

One of a multitude of clocks in different apartments now struck on her ear, and she reckoned three o'clock. Three hours away from home. What would Aunt Jane think? And while considering how she should get at a maid to tell her she could wait no longer, a light step and a shuffling sound drew near, and, looking up, she perceived Dr. Jennings entering the room from the interior, accompanied by a pretty girl. The young lady was talking with animation, and looking up into the face of the great physician, who ambled by her side, his feet encased in soft woollen

slippers. They passed her by, without observing her, the doctor's fine face directed full to his pretty companion, and wearing a sweet, gentle smile. On they walked into the hall, leaving the door of the ante-room wide open, affording Annie a view beyond. She was greatly surprised to remark the conduct of the patients, who had been so anxiously waiting to see the doctor; they made a passage for him to walk through without venturing to interrupt him, and his countenance was a study; he did not ignore their presence, but appeared to imagine he was gifted with the power of invisibility, and kept turning on his finger a ring, as if it were a present from Gyges.

After letting out his young friend

the doctor retraced his steps with the same vacant look, but this time he was not let to pass all uninterrupted. One gentleman, more audacious than the rest, stepped forward and hurriedly said—

“I beg your pardon, sir, but when will it suit you to see Mrs. Hamilton? Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday?”

Dr. Jennings looked slightly confounded at such audacity (in not respecting his invisibility) and answered with the monosyllable—

“Sir!”

“Yes, sir,” said the gentleman, a little confused; “would Tuesday answer you?”

Very peevishly replied the doctor—

“As far as I can see, sir. As far as I can see.”

“Thank you, sir, thank you,” returned the gentleman, bowing, hat in hand, evidently greatly relieved at having secured an answer.

Annie's wonder increased. She began to feel quite shy of this wonderful man as he now again drew near. This time he was not so abstracted; he had no companion to listen to, besides Captain Hamilton's audacity had roused him to a sense of present things, and there was no danger of Annie's being overlooked again. He saw her and smiled. His smile was very pleasing, kind, and genial.

“You here!” he said; “and how long?”

“I am not sure. Perhaps two hours.”

“Two hours! Ah, how much I am to blame. I now remember it was your card that was brought in to me.”

“Yes; you told me to send up my card to you whenever I called.”

“So I did. I am to blame, but my mind was so occupied when it reached me, it does not appear to me as if I had seen the name until now — Miss Jennings:— Yes! I now remember distinctly. How could I have forgotten sweet Annie even for a moment?”

Here the doctor smiled again, and, taking her by the hand, led her up the stairs, on which were stationed a few

impatient patients, who thought to catch him thus; and yet, like their companions in waiting down stairs (when the opportunity was afforded) failed to take advantage of it, and allowed the doctor to pass by, holding the same abstracted appearance as before.

He pushed on, still holding Annie's hand, and leading her into one of the little rooms before mentioned, he left her, saying—

“In a few moments, my dear, I will send for you.”

But a doctor's minutes are not counted as sixty seconds, and a half hour elapsed before a maid summoned her, and pointing to an open door close at hand, hurried her in, just as a lady

of considerable height and width walked out.

Behind this ponderous subject stood the doctor, looking all impatience, with outstretched hand, to welcome in Annie.

This little apartment was similar to the others in size and furniture, with one addition, a Davenport, on which the learned man wrote his prescriptions. Now, the doctor leaving the door ajar (the window also being open, but doctors act strangely diverse to their orders), led Annie to the little couch, on which he seated her and himself, tucking up one leg to rest, for he was fagged by a hard day's work.

“So you have come at last,” he

said, after a pause, spent in examining her attentively, and perceived, with professional acumen, that something uncommon had occurred.

Annie, conscious of his searching glance, felt confused; her bosom heaved, and her pink colour deepened, and faded away by turns.

“*At last*, Dr. Jennings! It was but yesterday that you invited me.”

“Yes, true; but I expected you for many years before. I waited three years; then I heard how gay and admired you were, and I married.”

“I dared not come to see you that day, Dr. Jennings, I was so rude to you, and you were so very angry.”

“Was I? I suppose I was, yet you did not care to inquire *how* angry, or for how long a time. What saith the Scriptures? ‘A soft answer turneth away wrath.’ I did not forget what it also says: ‘Let not the sun go down on your wrath.’ Annie, I watched and waited for you in vain, and then I married. I scarcely thought to have had the start of you, and yet here I have a child of six years old, and you are still a maid.”

Annie muttered some confused sentence, then asked to see the little Penelope.

“Yes, presently; surely there is no hurry, sweet one. It is long since Andrew Jennings has recognised him-

self; in your presence he tastes the flavour of the bramble-berries. Oh! Annie, sweetest, give me back my youth."

Annie started, shivered, and did not reply. The doctor, becoming more impassioned, repeated—

"Yes, Annie, you alone can do it. Give me back my youth, and be a mother to my child."

She struggled hard to answer, but the vision of her young lover in distant lands overcame her, and, sobbing, sighing, she swooned against his breast.

The doctor, being a doctor, of course knew exactly what remedies to apply. He hastily poured out some stimulating drops, and gently

forced them into Annie's pretty mouth. After a few seconds she sighed deeply, and opened her eyes on the anxious, intelligent face of her latest suitor.

"You feel better, Annie?" inquired the doctor, tenderly.

"Yes, better," she replied, too short a time insensible to be unconscious of what had caused her illness.

"I was abrupt, Annie; shamefully abrupt, considering I am a doctor. I should have foreseen how a startling announcement may affect a delicate frame."

"Oh, no, it was not that. I really do not know what caused it. I never fainted before," returned Annie, quite

reckless in her disregard of truth; but even conscientious women display the same untruthfulness in affairs connected with the affections.

“I am perfectly well now, Dr. Jennings.”

“Call me Andrew, or I shall think that you despise me still.”

“Despise you? Oh, no.”

(Annie trembled for the success of her scheme).

“Well, show it, Annie. Give me back my youth.”

From head to heel that girl shook, and yet her purpose never wavered; with a wonderfully steady voice she answered,

“If it be in my power, Andrew.”

Dr. Jennings uttered a cry of joy,

and, folding her impetuously in his arms, he kissed her lips, her throat, her hands; he pressed her repeatedly in his arms; he was intoxicated with his great joy.

Annie bore it passively until she could bear it no longer, then burst into a hysterical fit of weeping.

Dr. Jennings quickly released her, feeling very guilty, and remembering then for the first time the open door, he rose and shut it, and seating himself again beside her, he soothed her into calmness.

“Dry your eyes, pretty one, or, rather, let me;” and he touched her face gently with her handkerchief.

Annie’s sobs ceased; she smiled at

him, and his face reflected that smile; beaming all over, he said—

“My pretty one, I must dismiss my patients for the day, or, perhaps, I should be indicted for manslaughter, for surely I should make some frightful mistake in my prescriptions, and address them all to ‘Annie Jennings.’”

Annie laughed outright, and declared she must go home, to which the doctor objected.

“You will visit my child first, Annie. Do not go away without seeing her.”

And Annie, although she could easily have foregone this pleasure, was forced to yield.

“I will first clear the house,” he

said, and, going to the door, he called a maid, and gave directions for the purpose; then returning, he and Annie between them put on her bonnet, and smoothed down her ruffled collar and cuffs, and Annie rose and stood on the carpet, the *fiancée* of her cousin Andrew, the celebrated Dr. Jennings.

Now the doctor led the way to his little daughter's apartments. These were situated in quite a different part of the house, and the way to them was through a long passage, which was completely shut in by double doors.

"This," said the Doctor, "is absolutely a part of my neighbour's house into which I broke an entrance; see

just there. It is of importance to have my child quite out of reach of any disturbance; and my patients sometimes are noisy, Annie, although I make a free use of chloroform; still in ugly operations it does not altogether quiet a sense of suffering, and little Penelope is of such a nervous organization she would be affected by such sounds as sometimes make themselves heard in my house."

With conversation like this the great Doctor entertained Annie, turning occasionally his head towards her, and preceding her steps in order to show the way. Owing to this procedure, she had an excellent view of his whole figure — of his breadth of

shoulder combined with the five feet three inches, the entire length of the man.

It was not pleasing, certainly; symmetry was wanting, and proportion was not there. A strange contrast he formed to the image, distinct and clear, that rose up to her mind's eye of young Charley Maitland—beautiful in youth and in symmetry, her soldier-lover, and surrounded with all the pomps and pageantry of the camp; breathing of spices, of dates, of glowing oranges and palms, and all the glories of the voluptuous East; while here her ears were assailed by accounts of painful surgical operations, of suffering patients, and of hysterical children. The contrast was not agree-

able, and Annie almost groaned a sigh. The quick-eared Doctor heard, and turned to her with anxious inquiries—

“ Was she ill ?”

“ Oh, no, not the least. Your little girl is well defended here; no sounds from your department could reach her, I should say.”

“ Well, I believe not, Annie. I fear you will find my little one very untractable. I could not put on the curb for the short time I see her, and her nurse has not heart to control the motherless babe. Annie, will you train her up in the way she should go ?”

In all good faith she promised to do her best.

“You were very good to me when a wilful, spoiled child, in common gratitude I should return it now.”

“Not in gratitude, my Annie; let not such a word appear in our vocabulary.”

Annie was spared further words by their having now reached the door of the nursery.

At the fire with work in hand, sat Mrs. M'Laren, Penelope's nurse, commonly called by that little girl, Clary; and standing facing a corner of the apartment was the said little Penelope, busily engaged scolding one of her dolls who had been naughty, and whom she had placed there as punishment.

With uplifted finger she was saying—

“You tore your best frock, miss, in climbing the apple tree, and you stole the fruit your papa forbid your touching, and you beat nurse because she tried to bring you down from the tree; altogether you have behaved shamefully, Cleopatra, and now you shall stand in that corner until your papa comes in, then I shall ask him what is to be done with you; you have broken my heart with your conduct.”

The child stamped her foot in pretended passion and grief.

“Here I am, mamma,” broke in Dr. Jennings, “and grieved I am to hear how naughty Cleopatra has been.”

“Oh, dear papa, is that you?”

she joyfully exclaimed; "Cleopatra has indeed been bad, so very bad."

Catching a glimpse of Annie half hid behind her father, she pulled up short, and, getting very red, she retreated.

Mrs. M'Laren, curtsying, placed a seat for Miss Jennings, and vanished into the adjoining room.

"Penelope, come here," said Dr. Jennings.

Penelope stood immovable, one finger laid on her rosy lips, and with very round eyes she stared at Annie.

"Come here, my bairn," reiterated her father, but with no other effect; not a step was made to advance.

"Come here, I desire, Penelope,"

reiterated Dr. Jennings in a decided voice.

Very slowly was one little foot put forward, then the other, while the round blue-gray eyes were fastened with scrutinizing gaze on Annie.

Slow as was this motion, it yet brought her within reach of her father's arm, who, catching hold of her pinafore, seated her on his knee beside Annie.

Dr. Jennings had not described her amiss, when he said she was like a snowdrop in a poppy-flower. Her skin was dazzling in its fairness, and her hands and arms were round and dimpled. She was tall for her years, and yet the limbs showed strength and firmness, and her feet were small

and beautifully formed. Her face was oval in shape, the features neat and regular, and a pretty mouth with a dimpled smile completed her charms; for her eyes were not handsome and the eyebrow was simply indicated by a red line. Her hair was brilliant, red was not exactly its colour, it was more of the crimson tint, and gave the effect which Rubens aims at in his portraits. Too much colour, perhaps, this little creature had to please many, yet in a cold northern latitude she was as pleasant a picture of a child as well could be seen.

“Pen, my bairn,” whispered papa, “look at that lady and kiss her.”

Pen, so adjured, raised her crimson head from off the broad shoulder and,

after a hasty glance, laid it again on its resting-place.

“Penelope, do as I desire you,” was again whispered, this time a little less softly.

“No, papa,” replied the refractory child, speaking with nervous loudness, “I do not like her; she is a widow.”

“A widow, child! She is not a widow. What makes you say so?”

“She *must* be a widow, papa,” (this was spoken quite decidedly, after giving Annie a prolonged glance); “she must be, papa, for she has a widow’s nose.”

“Child, what nonsense are you talking?” said her father, with a slight tremble of amusement about

his mouth, for he had a keen sense of humour.

“Yes, papa, she *is* a widow; she has a long nose, and the point of it is red. Clary says that is the sure mark of a widow, and I don’t like widows; no, indeed, dear papa, and I won’t kiss anyone but you dearest darling! my own very own papa!”

And in the vehemence of her affection she nearly strangled the object of her love.

Involuntarily Dr. Jennings glanced at Annie, and perceived the child’s observation was accurate, in so far as that Annie’s handsome (perhaps *rather long*) nose was slightly tinged with that colour which we are accustomed to view so differently, according to its *locale*.

Now, to speak truth, the normal condition of Miss Jennings' nose was a pure white, of an alabaster marble whiteness, but hysterical tears at intervals for forty-eight hours adds to colour in that feature, while it has the tendency to diminish it in its orthodox place, the cheeks. And poor Annie's last burst had left this pink shade which the observant child had at once detected; connecting this fact with some talk she had overheard between her nurse and a friend of hers, she conceived this strange idea of Miss Jennings being a widow.

Annie, for the first time in her life, felt discomposed about her appearance; she did look strangely unlike her or-

dinary self, whose greatest charm, perhaps, consisted in her statuesque repose, which had won for her the epithet of Madonna. She saw Dr. Jennings' look and hasty withdrawal—she felt the warm tint where it should not be—she heard the little girl's remark, and she became positively unladylike-looking in her uneasy consciousness of her false position.

False, we say, for the redness of her nose was merely accidental, not habitual, and her future little daughter-in-law was impressed with the belief that she was a red-nosed lady, and would describe her as such to Clary. Worse still, she felt instinctively that Dr. Jennings was amused at the remark; and like a true man was cooled, even

though it were but momentarily, in his passion for her.

This did him good service, for his consequence rose in her eyes as she felt lowered in his—she no longer saw the little legs, nor remembered the palm trees and spices of the East—she forgot there was a Highland regiment or a tartan scarf in the world—she thought but of winning an approving look and word from little Miss Penelope Jennings, *ætat* six and a half.

“Cleopatra will be made sick kept standing so long, Penelope—what do you think? mothers do not treat their children like that,” she hazarded.

“Do you really say so?” returned Penelope, starting up, forgetful that

it was the widow whom she disliked who spoke.

“Indeed I do. What does papa think; he is a physician, and should know?”

“I think Miss Jennings is right; Cleopatra should be forgiven,” answered the Doctor.

“But she has torn her frock—her pink silk—that Clary and I made up only yesterday for her;” and Penelope eagerly caught up the doll, then running to Annie, she laid it in her lap, showing off the mischief that had been done, quite serious in her concern at the supposed carelessness of Cleopatra.

“Let me take the frock home, and I will put it to rights; see we can

take out this breadth where the rent is, and slip in a petticoat of tulle, and loop it up with pink ribbons, which is quite the fashion. I can make her shoes of the torn silk ; the shoes should always match the dress in colour."

"Should they?" said the child slowly, and gazing into Annie's face, she asked where was "home."

"Not far from this; perhaps papa will permit Nurse Clary to bring you to visit me to-morrow or next day, when I shall have the frock and slippers ready?"

"Do you know Clary?"

"No."

"Why do you ask, missy?" inquired Dr. Jennings, unadvisedly considering what had passed before.

“Because, papa,”—she returned, never withdrawing her gaze from Miss Jennings’ face, and seizing her father’s hand,—“Because, papa, I could ask her is she a widow, and—”

“Stop, stop, child—no more of that nonsense.”

“Only, papa,” she continued, excitedly, leaving the doll with Miss Jennings and climbing on her father’s knee—“Only, papa, Clary said widows wear their dresses short, and show their feet, and that their feet are kept so nice and tidy, and that they never soil their stockings the way I do—just see here,” (she pulled down her boot to show a stain on the ankle), “and, papa, that lady’s

dress *is* short." (Annie hurriedly drew in her feet.)

"Hush, hush, naughty child."

"Yes, papa, I saw her feet and her ankles, and her stockings are so nice, she must be a widow. Dear papa, will she hurt Cleopatra?"

"I tell you, Penelope, I will not permit her to take your doll, or to mend her dress, or do any of the kind things she has offered, for you are a naughty child to speak so."

Penelope burst into a flood of tears, sobbing and crying as if her heart would break, and alarmed by her darling's tears, Clary rushed in.

"Oh, Clary! Clary!" the child said,

running to her and burying her face in her arms.

“Is she a widow?”

Dr. Jennings was greatly provoked. There was such burlesqueness about the whole scene, that it made it a difficult matter to know how to treat it. He also felt startled at the idea that, although Annie was not at this time a widow, she was very possibly a widow *in petto*, and that he, Dr. Jennings, was now making for her the first step towards developing this germ which his little Penelope so persistently maintained was in her.

Aloud, (however with dignity) he said—

“Come, Miss Jennings, let us leave this naughty child; I regret she should

have made so unfavourable an appearance to you; I can but hope that another day she will permit you to see her behave herself in a manner befitting a young lady."

Penelope's roars ceased, but it was evidently only the lull that occurs in great gales when the winds are in silence collecting all their forces to sweep along with tenfold power.

Miss Jennings tried to smile off the Doctor's anger, and to snatch a kiss from the flushed cheek of the excited child; and she received a tacit permission to take away Cleopatra in order to mend the rent garment, and to make the pink silk slippers.

"Come to me to-morrow, dear, if

papa permits, when you shall receive Cleopatra in fresh finery.”

Penelope hung her head still lower over Clary's shoulder, and did not reply. Miss Jennings then left the apartment, followed by the Doctor, who, with pained feelings, remarked the looped-up, shortened dress, and beneath it the clean pasterns and active feet of his beloved, while on closing the door the pent up roars broke out afresh, and his ears were saluted by the cries of his little Grecian—

“Clary, Clary, she *is* a widow!”

LONDON :

Printed by A. Schulze, 13, Poland Street.

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